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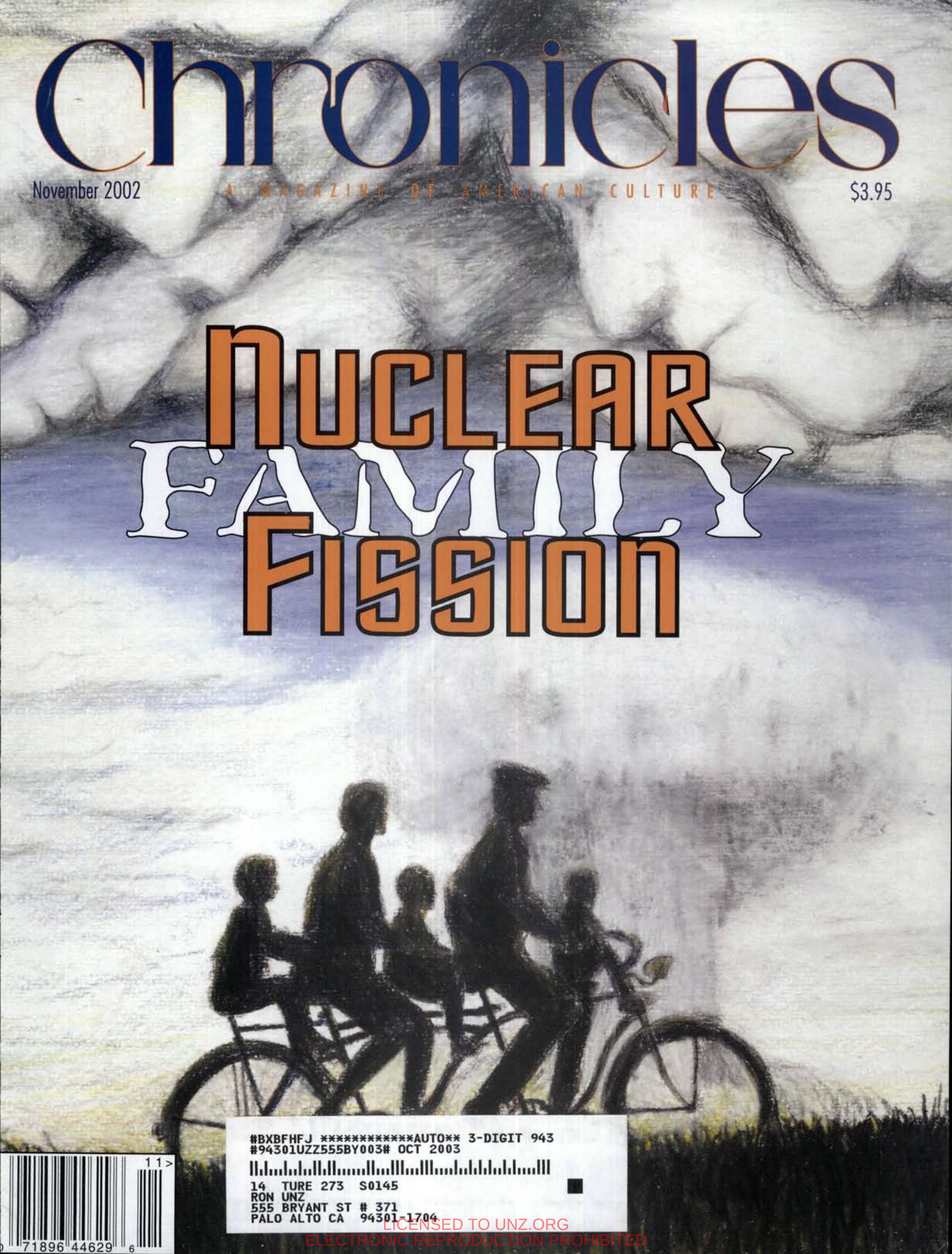

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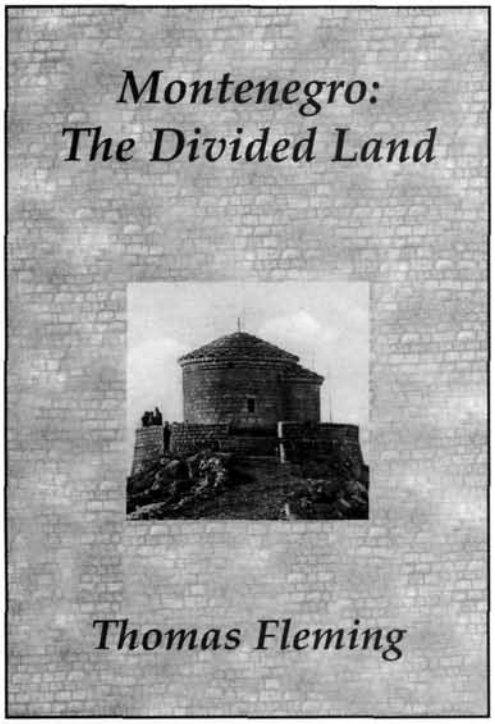
This Time, Be Prepared

The Serb land of Montenegro is once again at the crossroads of history. The blood-soaked mountains and dramatic coastline of this small land have been fought over by Illyrians, Macedonians, Romans, Byzantines, Turks, and Venetians, and, in the 20th century, by the armies of Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Germany. In World War II, Montenegro lost more men, per capita, than any nation of Europe, and now it is the latest target of the so-called international community, which has tried to create a phony separatist movement (complete with a bogus national church) to continue the disastrous policies that have involved the United States in wars over Bosnia and Kosovo.

Thomas Fleming has written the first well-researched history of Montenegro in the English language, taking the story from ancient times all the way up to the current crisis over separation from Serbia. This is no dry academic tome but a lively account of a brave people whose brave history rivals the tales of Leonidas and his Spartans at Thermopylae.



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—Slavenko Terzic
Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences

"Dr. Fleming's book is a fascinating account of the heroic struggle of the Montenegrin people to defend their freedom and liberty against all odds. It tells their magnificent story in a stirring narrative that combines scholarly research with astute observation of how this tiny nation today may yet face its greatest challenge."

—James Bisset
Former ambassador to Yugoslavia
from Canada

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Chronicles

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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On Media Conspiracies

Samuel Francis sounds like a Clintonoid in his column "Will Europe Survive?" (*Principalities & Powers*, August). He chides the few Republicans who sought the truth about the serious crimes allegedly committed by the Clintons as "conspiracy mongers," while avoiding such major policy issues as immigration and affirmative action.

While Dr. Francis is correct to criticize Republican leaders for abandoning conservative policies and platforms, he falls into a trap that our power establishment loves: Debate and win on the issues, while forgetting about any criminality or wrongdoing; or, as George W. Bush has said repeatedly, "Let's move on."

Dr. Francis is dangerously wrong to trivialize felonies committed by members of our federal government. If there is credible, corroborative, and substantial evidence that our rulers have committed high crimes, they must be investigated and, if need be, prosecuted and punished.

As damage control, the Clintonoids yelled "conspiracy mongers!" virtually every time an allegation was made against them, epitomized by the former First Lady's "vast right-wing conspiracy." How ironic that Dr. Francis seems to echo that propaganda.

The centrist-liberal *Economist* said this regarding the Clinton camorra: "It is true . . . that a peculiar pattern of suicides and violence surrounds people connected to the Clintons or their associates. It may be no more than coincidence, but it prompts questions" ("America Needs Your Verdict," July 19, 1994).

Does Samuel Francis believe the *Economist* is mad with "labyrinthine" conspiracy theories that normally come from Dan Burton and Chris Ruddy?

—*Kenneth Reynolds*
The Bronx, NY

Allow me to note my profound agreement with the perceptive as well as the understandably sarcastic interpretation of European events offered by Samuel Francis in his August commentary. Dr. Francis is right to underscore the utterly outrageous misrepresentation of European politics that has emanated from the American press. The fevered attempts to identify the violence committed by Muslim immigrants against synagogues and Jewish businesses in Europe with European critics of immigration involve a lie of staggering proportions, one repeatedly encountered in news reporting in the United States and in Europe. It is a lie worthy of Goebbels's Ministry of Propaganda. Equally odious has been the practice, engaged in by Jewish organizational leaders (particularly Abe Foxman in the United States and Daniel Luzzatti in Italy), of linking what is clearly Islamic antisemitism to an increasingly vague medieval Christian or New Testament legacy. Dr. Francis states his justified opinion that European nationalists such as Jean-Marie Le Pen stand for "exactly the opposite" of the politics pursued by Islamicists and their leftist multicultural enablers. In this case, pointing out the obvious may be like spitting into the wind. The Islamicization of Europe and multicultural politics go hand in hand; both require intricate but palpable falsehoods to blame antisemitism on European civilization.

—*Paul Gottfried*
Elizabethtown, PA

Dr. Francis Replies:

By all means, as Mr. Reynolds writes, "If there is credible, corroborative, and substantial evidence that our rulers have committed high crimes, they must be investigated and, if need be, prosecuted and punished." I do not disagree in the slightest. But it speaks volumes that, out of my two-page column discussing mainly the current European politics of immigration, Mr. Reynolds managed to tease out and concentrate on a single sentence criticizing conservatives for their obsession with the crimes, sex lives, and moral turpitude of the Clintons. The two points that Mr. Reynolds seems to miss are that, one, the preoccupation of the right with discrediting the Clintons morally and legally effectively drove out most of the more serious political issues with which the Clintons could have been challenged, leaving the right with virtually no substantive issues to talk about at all, and, two, this was probably a deliberate

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tactic of the conservative and GOP leadership, so they could avoid taking firm positions on the issues I mentioned and allow conservative support for immigration control, economic nationalism, anti-interventionism, *etc.*, to wither. Because of his own apparent preoccupation with the Clintons, in other words, Mr. Reynolds still doesn't get it. We can survive the odd crook and sex fiend in high office; we cannot survive an equally corrupt right that refuses to define and engage its political rivals on substantive public issues.

On Lincolnolatry

Joseph E. Fallon's thesis ("Lincoln and the Death of the Old Republic," *Vital Signs*, August) that the Lincoln administration destroyed the Old Republic of the Founding Fathers and replaced it with the ideological foundations of today's welfare state is unassailable. Indeed, this result is *celebrated* by such left-wing legal scholars as George P. Fletcher, author of *Our Secret Constitution: How Lincoln Remade America*. Fletcher believes that the goals of "egalitarianism" reflect what he calls a "higher law" than the Constitution itself. "Lincoln's casual attitude toward formal constitutional institutions such as the writ of habeas corpus" is to be applauded, says Fletcher, for it paved the way for the effective overthrow of the constitutional limitations on governmental power that once existed.

Of course, Lincoln had more than a "casual attitude" toward the Constitution; his actions prove that he had absolute contempt for it, as Fallon demonstrates.

If the "official history" of Abraham Lincoln is a lie, as Fallon says, then who are the official liars? It is the Lincoln cult, the industry of court historians who have, for more than a century, deceived the American public about the real Lincoln. The Lincoln cult spans the ideological spectrum from Marxist historian Eric Foner to such big-government "conservatives" as Harry Jaffa. These polemicists provide the ideological "cover" for the highly centralized Leviathan state that we all suffer under today.

Jaffa and his many acolytes have spent decades performing intellectual somersaults to create a fantasy image of Abraham Lincoln. The Declaration of Independence was a declaration of secession from the British Empire, but Jaffa insists that the document supports Lincoln's crushing of the Southern secessionists. As Fallon notes in his article, Lincoln eviscerated constitutional liberty, yet Jaffa insists that "Lincoln never did anything that was unconstitutional." Lincoln micromanaged a brutal war *against civilians* as well as combatants, yet he is universally described as an "humanitarian." Tens of thousands of Southern civilians perished during the war, and hundreds of millions of dollars in private property were carried off by plundering federal soldiers. Yet Lincoln is described as a champion of reconciliation.

Lincoln declared that "I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races." "On at least fourteen occasions between 1854 and 1860," writes *Ebony* magazine editor Lerone Bennett, Jr., in his book *Forced into Glory*, "Lincoln said unambiguously that he believed the Negro was inferior to the White race." Until the day he died, Lincoln advocated the "peaceful deportation" of all black people in America to Africa, Haiti, or Central America. Yet the court historians have portrayed him as a racial saint.

The list of official lies about Lincoln would fill a very large shelf. The exposure of these lies and of the role they have played in destroying the constitutional republic of the Founding Fathers is a project worthy of *Chronicles*' attention.

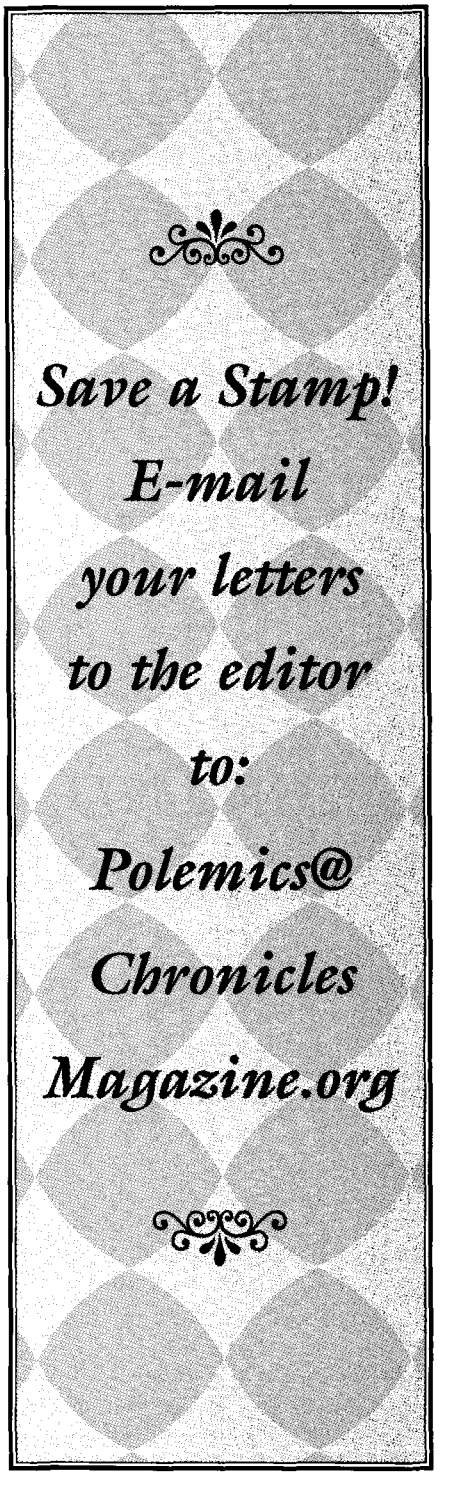
—*Thomas J. DiLorenzo*
Clarksville, MD

On Public-School Naysayers

Mary Berry Smith joins the growing chorus of pundits and others who are concerned about the nation's "failing public-school system" ("Educating for Jeopardy," Correspondence, July). The education bureaucrats, however, are not concerned. In 1993, the Department of Education published the results of the National Adult Literacy Survey, the first study ever done in this country that provides detailed and accurate information on the literacy skills of the adult population as a whole. The following is from the Executive Summary to the report, page xviii: "Perhaps the most salient finding of this survey is that such large percentages of adults performed in the lowest levels of prose, document, and quantitative literacy. In and of itself, this may not indicate a serious problem. After all, the majority of adults who demonstrated limited skills described themselves as reading or writing English well."

So, Mrs. Smith, relax; there's nothing to worry about. Besides, why would the central government want a citizenry that could read, write, and reason? Wouldn't that just create all sorts of problems?

—*J. Michael Brown*
Tulsa, OK



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GERHARD SCHROEDER has won another four-year term as German chancellor following his Red-Green coalition's victory in September—the narrowest ever seen in a German election. Until just weeks before the election, he was expected to lose, and, considering his record, deservedly so. Under Chancellor Schroeder, Germany has enjoyed a double-digit unemployment rate—over four million Germans are currently out of work—coupled with a continuing deluge of Third World immigrants; in addition, Schroeder's first term was plagued by scandals, which forced the resignation of Defense Minister Rudolph Scharping last July.

What saved Schroeder was his strong, determined opposition to Germany's participation in the coming U.S.-led war against Iraq. In a campaign almost devoid of issues for the Social Democrats to exploit, Schroeder discovered that standing up to Bush paid rich political dividends. When he declared that he would "not click his heels" and say "yes" to whatever President Bush decides, the Germans ate it up. The rhetoric soon escalated from attacks on Washington's Iraq policy—which were both legitimate and justified—to crude anti-Americanism. Scharping was quoted in the *New York Times* saying that Bush wanted to overthrow Saddam to please "a powerful—perhaps overly powerful—Jewish lobby" (which is what most European politicians think, but they don't like to hear it from a German). And finally, Schroeder's justice minister, Herta Daeubler-Gmelin, famously compared President Bush's Iraq policy to Adolf Hitler's bullying tactics.

The tired *reductio ad Hitlerum* is a sure mark of moral degeneracy and intellectual bankruptcy, but it has proved particularly effective for Schroeder's camp. In the closing weeks of the campaign, his party moved from five points behind Bavarian Premier Edmund Stoiber's conservative CDU/CSU coalition to a dead heat. Stoiber could not devise a viable counterstrategy: He disagrees with the aggressive style of the Bush administration, but he is also steeped in the Atlanticist tradition of Germany's Christian Democrats, which hearkens back to Konrad Adenauer. In the end, he refused to exploit the anti-Americanism endemic to the European left and now rising even on the traditionalist right.

The problems facing Germany's society and economy will not be fixed by the second Schroeder administration. The nation that gave us the word *Angst* will remain in its grip until it settles into being a "normal" European nation.

During the campaign, Stoiber controversially declared that the Czech Republic should not be admitted into the European Union until it rescinds the "Benes Decrees," which were enacted as a cover for the expulsion of ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland after World War II. He is also an advocate of stiffer immigration control, a touchy subject in a country that, while it has been deluged by phony asylum-seekers, depends on immigrant labor.

There is no Jörg Haider or Jean-Marie Le Pen in Germany—for now, anyway. Even if there were, the two leading parties would gang up on him: The centrist duopoly of German politics remains unchanged. Yet, while the Bush administration continues to insist on an unnecessary and risky war with Iraq, Schroeder's Germany may lead Europe away from its current path of Blairite submissiveness to Washington's neoimperial dictates. That would be good news—for Germany, for Europe, and for America.

—*Srdja Trifkovic*

THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA's desirability as an oil and natural-gas transit point has made her a pawn in a game that involves Washington, Moscow, Caspian Sea oil, and the fate of Iraq. And this game is, in turn, part of the great game going on in Central Asia.

Since September 11, 2001, American policymakers have used the "war on terrorism" as an excuse to step up intervention in Georgian affairs, sending military personnel to Georgia's Pankisi Gorge region to "train and equip" Georgian military forces to combat terrorists allegedly connected to Osama bin Ladin. The American presence also appears aimed at propping up the shaky regime of ex-Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. The Kremlin did not object—at first, anyway. How could it, when President Vladimir Putin himself had claimed that Afghanistan-trained terrorists were using Georgian territory as a base for operations in Chechnya, a charge Moscow used effectively to end Western attempts to interfere in its war on the Chechen insurgents? And the United States could simply state that its stepped-up presence in Georgia—a country whose government controls little outside her capital and is faced with Russian-backed independence movements in Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia—is merely one more aspect of the "war on terrorism."

The Bush administration's decision to mount a war on Iraq, however, gave Moscow an opening to reassert its influence on Georgia and to bargain over future oil and gas deals with Washington. President Bush would like Russia's backing—or, at least, only a muted formal protest—in the event of war. And Putin would like to preserve Russian oil companies' position in Iraqi oil production, something that could garner lots of petrodollars for Moscow's rapidly emptying coffers. Thus, Moscow chose the month of September, while the White House was busy mounting an extensive p.r. campaign justifying its war on Iraq, to threaten war with Georgia.

The warning came in a statement by President Putin on the anniversary of the September 11 attacks: "If the Georgian leadership cannot create a security zone in the regions of the Georgian-Russian border and does not put an end to the bandit sorties and attacks on contiguous regions of Russia," Putin intoned, then Moscow "reserves the right to act in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, which enshrines every UN member's" right to "self defense."

Kremlin-watchers immediately saw through Putin's threats: Moscow was awash with rumors that Putin was using the Georgian-Pankisi problem to reassert its influence in Georgia and bargain with the United States over terms for supporting Washington's war on Iraq. Some even asserted that Moscow was exaggerating the number of Chechen insurgents in the region, just as Washington was exaggerating the extent of the ties that the insurgents may have to bin Laden's terrorist network.

Moscow would not like Georgia to fall permanently into Washington's orbit (there is already talk in Shevardnadze's capital that Georgia might seek member-

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ship in NATO) and would like either to promote a Russian pipeline route for Caspian Sea oil and gas or, failing that, to participate in developing the Georgian route, which U.S.-backed transnationals support. So Putin has asked a good question: If the United States can mount preemptive strikes on "terrorist states," then why can't Russia? He has also, between the lines, posed a rhetorical question: You need us to help you see through your projects in Iraq and the Caspian, don't you? Otherwise, Moscow could make trouble for Washington's pals in the U.S. "oil patch," not only in the Caucasus (a disintegrating, war-torn Georgia would not be a good pipeline route) but in Central Asia, where the U.S.-backed Afghan regime is negotiating with Washington's ally Pakistan over an oil and gas transit route through its territory (bypassing Russia again).

The United States has already signaled its willingness to bargain with Russia through ex-CIA director and Iraq warhawk James Woolsey, who has made it clear what the United States is ready to do for a cooperative Russia: "France and Russia have oil companies and interests in Iraq," Woolsey recently stated, and "We have to tell them that if they help push Iraq toward a decent form of government, we will do everything possible to ensure that the new [Iraqi] government, and the US companies, can work side by side [with them]." And Moscow has responded: In late August, a member of the staff of the Russian embassy in Washington met with representatives of the U.S.-backed Iraqi National Congress, an opposition-in-exile to the current Iraqi regime.

Meanwhile, a kidnapping in Moscow has added a strange twist to the whole hydrocarbon saga: A few days before President Bush's request to Congress for action against Iraq and a few days after Putin's threats to Georgia, Sergey Kukura, vice president of Lukoil, one of Russia's biggest oil companies, was kidnapped. The Russian media exploded with speculation over who was behind the abduction, with some vaguely hinting that Kukura was the victim of an intra-"clan" struggle: Lukoil chief Vagit Alekperov is one of the country's most influential oligarchs, and Lukoil is involved in developing Russia's share of the Caspian Sea oil and gas take as well as Russian concessions in Iraq. And some of Alekperov's cronies want him to make certain changes in the company's policies. But which policies?

We may now know the answer: A few days after Kukura's abduction, an article appeared in the influential business paper *Vedomosti*, which is a partner with the *Wall Street Journal* and is also, according to Kremlin deep throats, under the influence of certain key players in the Russian oligarchy. The article blasted Alekperov for not being more pro-American. According to the unsigned editorial, Lukoil, which is majority state-owned, had not done enough to get involved in the U.S.-backed Georgian pipeline, construction on which had begun that very day. The article claimed that a route from Baku (on the Caspian) through Tbilisi (Georgia's capital) to Ceyhan (in NATO member Turkey) could pump much more oil to America than the Russian route. That, together with the Iraq concessions, would make a deal with the United States a very profitable proposition for certain Russian oil and gas producers.

Some Lukoil executives and their allies, especially the pro-American oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, are encouraging cooperation with the United States: The Moscow "oil barons" are hot to get into the American oil market. Moreover, Lukoil has already begun buying up gas stations across the United States, while Khodorkovsky's YUKOS firm has begun selling oil in America. And rumor has it that Kukura's kidnapping— which some believe was the work of Russian intelligence services—was merely a warning to Alekperov.

—Denis Petrov

WILLIAM BENNETT's latest fundraising project is an organization he calls "Americans for Victory Over Terrorism," a special project of his previous experiment in do-nothing think-tankery, Empower America. Collecting a veritable rogue's gallery of lobbyists and special-interest reps, the former Czar of Drugs, Education, and Culture says that he is modeling AVOT explicitly on such neoconservative Cold War groups as the Committee for a Free World. Bennett promises the usual full schedule of paid advertisements in the *New York Times*, teach-ins, press conferences, *etc.*—anything to bring back the happy days of the Cold War, when you could eliminate a rival simply by calling him "unpatriotic" or "comsymp."

Bennett's first list of threats to America's internal security is interesting: one goofball ex-president, Jimmy Carter; one goofball congressman, Maxine Waters; and Lewis Lapham, editor of *Harper's*. Why Lapham? While Carter and Waters have been content, for the most part, to criticize the Bush administration's saber-rattling, Mr. Lapham has committed *lèse-majesté* in mocking John Ashcroft as a "mullah" and ridiculing even the Czar himself.

The idea that Lewis Lapham is either a leftist or a peacenik, much less a threat to anyone's security, is something only Bill Bennett could dream up. Mr. Lapham is a professional curmudgeon, something of a cross between Henry Adams and H.L. Mencken, without the gravity of the one or the brilliance of the other. At his best, he is a fine essayist with a graceful prose style that reminds us of a time when Americans read books and talked about serious things, a country that had room for George Santayana, Paul Elmer More, and Albert Jay Nock. He does not like the vulgarity and greed of America's business and political leaders—and says so—and he has even challenged the pretensions of the New York intellectuals who claim to represent the best and brightest of Western civilization.

There was a time, back in the late 70's, when the New York establishment regarded Mr. Lapham, who edited *Harper's* for the first time between 1976 and 1981, as a serious problem. In issue after issue, *Harper's* published devastating cultural criticisms by Tom Wolfe, by Lapham himself, and by Brian Griffin, whose "Panic Among the Philistines" sent shockwaves through the corridors of Knopf and Random House. Lapham even wrote for the other great magazine of the period, Andrei Navrozov's *Yale Literary Magazine*, which the establishment, with the help of Yale's President Bart Giammatti, put out of business. If Lapham were a leftist, it is odd that he was willing not only to publish such conservatives as Chilton Williamson, Jr., and Tom Bethell but even to hire (in addition to Bethell) Navrozov, Martin Wooster, and Katherine Dalton.

To get rid of the dangerous Lapham, the establishment had to rig the sale of

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Harper's with one string attached: Lapham had to go. His replacement was the lackey of the regime *par excellence*, Michael Kinsley. When Lapham returned, some of the fire had gone out, and the magazine has steadily become more conventional. Nonetheless, Lewis Lapham does, in fact, continue to represent a threat to American security—the security of hypocrisy and straight-party thinking exemplified by William Bennett. One single essay of Lewis Lapham is worth more than all the ghostwritten "books" and articles that have been circulated under William Bennett's name.

—*Thomas Fleming*

MICHAEL MCCONNELL, to use the overworked metaphor, is the "poster boy" for the Senate Democrats' attempts to frustrate President Bush's promise to appoint more Supreme Court justices like Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas. Scalia and Thomas are the two current justices who have most closely embraced a jurisprudence faithful to the understanding of the Framers, and, thus, they are the two most opposed to legislating from the bench. So far, the Senate Democrats on the Judiciary Committee have acted in accordance with the wishes of their firmest supporters—pro-abortion activists, affirmative-action advocates, and opponents of allowing religion into the public square—who view Scalia and Thomas as anathema. Accordingly, they have rejected superbly qualified conservative nominees to the federal appellate courts, such as federal district-court judge Charles Pickering of Mississippi (whom they wrongly tarred as a racist) and Texas Supreme Court Justice Patricia Owen (who, they claimed, was out of the mainstream with regard to a woman's "right to choose" and other issues). Pickering and Owen were not even sent to the Senate floor: Their nominations were killed by the Democrats on the committee by a ten-to-nine party-line vote.

The liberal "public-interest groups" have generally sought to "Bork" McConnell, too, painting him as a dangerous reactionary who, since he is on record opposing the reasoning in *Roe* v. *Wade*, would oppress women and commit other atrocities if placed on the bench. Until September 2002, the McConnell nomination to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals was successfully kept off the agenda of the Judiciary Committee, even though McConnell had been nominated in May 2001. The Judiciary Committee's failure to act on his nomination offered the Republicans a constant opportunity to criticize the Democrats, since McConnell's credentials—Supreme Court clerk for ultra-liberal Justice William Brennan; one of the most respected lawyers at the Supreme Court bar; and a longtime law professor at the prestigious law school of the University of Chicago and, most recently, at the University of Utah—were about as impeccable as they come.

Then McConnell was abruptly scheduled for a hearing before the committee in mid-September. The liberal groups were still bleating, but some observers thought they could discern an inclination to confirm McConnell. By the time you read this, you will know whether that was the case.

Three hundred law professors from every corner of the ideological spectrum, from Laurence Tribe and Akhil Amar on the left to myself on the right, signed a letter to the Judiciary Committee urging McConnell's confirmation, which may have carried some weight. More likely, the Senate Democrats figured that, by tossing the Republicans the McConnell bone, they could neutralize the criticism likely to arise in crucial Senate campaigns, which might result in the Republicans regaining control of that chamber.

Thus, confirming McConnell might simply be good politics; some maneuvers by liberal law professors, however, have suggested that McConnell was not really much like Scalia and Thomas after all. Cass R. Sunstein, a Chicago law professor, longtime colleague of McConnell, and a frequent Democratic witness before the Senate Judiciary Committee, wrote a letter in mid-August to its chairman, Sen. Patrick Leahy, urging McConnell's confirmation, on the grounds that he not only "is one of the best legal minds [Sunstein] had ever encountered" but also "is no ideologue. He is very different, for example, from Robert Bork and Justices Scalia and Thomas, all of whom have ideological tendencies." Exactly what Sunstein meant was obscure, but in his letter, and in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed (intriguingly titled "A Conservative Nominee Liberals Should Love") published the day before McConnell's hearing, Sunstein pointed out that McConnell was on record opposing the impeachment of President Clinton, criticizing the Supreme Court's rationale for stopping the recount in *Bush* v. *Gore*, and championing congressional power. As Sunstein put it in his letter to Leahy, "I can't be certain, but my strong hunch is that McConnell would be a strong defender of Congress' constitutional prerogatives, as reflected in his outstanding defense of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act" (which the Supreme Court threw out as exceeding Congress's powers).

McConnell is a good man who does deserve to be confirmed. When a president nominates a person of honor, intelligence, and accomplishment, his choice should not be scuttled by a Senate Judiciary Committee deferring to unscrupulous character assassins. Those hoping to see more judges like Scalia or Thomas, however, are likely to be disappointed unless the Senate changes hands in November.

—*Stephen B. Presser*

AIR CONDITIONING, you might be surprised to learn, marks its 100th anniversary this year. At a Brooklyn printing plant in 1902, Willis H. Carrier designed a system to control humidity, temperature, and air quality and, in the process, changed the world forever.

Before the widespread availability of air conditioning, families cooled off on porches, talking with neighbors as the children played, all sweltering together in a community. The community evolved when consumers gathered in air-conditioned theaters and restaurants. While today's ubiquitous use of air conditioning—and its first cousin, refrigeration—has made our lives more comfortable and convenient, it has also made us more isolated. Giant refrigerated meatpacking plants have replaced neighborhood butchers. Large refrigerated trucks move food to air-conditioned supermarkets to be bought by consumers who drive air-conditioned SUVs and taken home to families basking in central air. Affluence now means being hermetically sealed in air-conditioned environments;

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upscale gift shops even offer personal air-conditioning systems for those times when you have to go outside.

Nowhere has air conditioning had a greater impact than in the South, where car trips used to be postponed until the cool of the evening. The U.S. Department of Energy says that half of all housing units in America are air conditioned; in the South, the figure is 93 percent. Southern highways are clogged with air-conditioned vehicles carrying commuters to air-conditioned offices from ever more far-flung air-conditioned suburbs. We barely notice those less-fortunate urban dwellers who still sit on porches with their neighbors.

America is the most climate-controlled country on earth, yet there are vast areas of our land without air conditioning, according to the experts in the the air-conditioning and refrigeration industry. Eastern Michigan University historian Marsha Ackermann argues, in her book *Cold Comfort: America's Romance with Air Conditioning*, that air conditioning may become the next entitlement, as inner-city heat waves still claim lives and cause brownouts.

Before air conditioning came to the nation's capital, all legislators and most of the Washington bureaucracy left town in summer for cooler, healthier climates. Air conditioning made year-round sessions of Congress and a larger permanent bureaucracy possible, imperiling our pocketbooks and liberties. Dispersing an endless supply of hot air is truly an air-conditioning marvel.

—*Mark G. Michaelsen*

OBITER DICTA: Make plans now to join *Chronicles* editors and others in **Paris, France**, for The Rockford Institute's next **International Convivium**, tentatively scheduled for May 16-22, 2003. Please see page 22 for more details or call Christopher Check, executive vice president, at (815) 964-5811.

Scott P. Richert's October installment of *The Rockford Files* ("The Bells of St. Mary's") contained two minor factual errors. While Bishop Thomas Doran has *presided* over several Masses for the Latin Mass Community of Rockford, the May Confirmation was the first one he has *celebrated* at St. Mary's. Also, the year of the fire at the church was 1962.

Charles Edward Eaton, who lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is our first poet this month. Mr. Eaton is the author of four volumes of short stories; a novel, *A Lady of Pleasure*; and many collections of poetry including, most recently, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, which includes a number of poems published in *Chronicles*. He is the recipient of the North Carolina Award for Literature, among other prizes, and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Literature degree by St. Andrews College.

Our second poet is **Alfred Nicol**. His poetry will be included in an anthology titled *Contemporary Poets of New England*, edited by Robert Pack and Jay Parini. His work has appeared in the *New England Review*, *Atlanta Review*, the *Formalist*, *Rattapallax*, *Pivot*, and *Commonweal*. A member of the Powow River Poets, he lives in Amesbury, Massachusetts, where he teaches poetry and creative writing at Sparhawk School.

Our art this month is provided by our art director, **H. Ward Sterett** of Roscoe, Illinois. Mr. Sterett received his B.F.A. from the University of Colorado and his M.F.A. from Northern Illinois University, and he attended the L'Abri Fellowship, where he studied the effect of Christianity on art. He currently works as a sculptor, painter, and printmaker in Roscoe.

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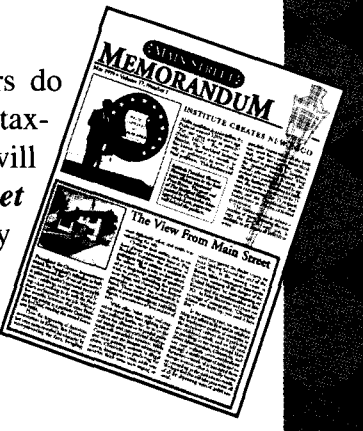

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by Thomas Fleming

In Praise of the Clan

A new Dark Age is already upon us, and perhaps we might learn a few lessons from the last one. It was a time when the arts of civilization were dimly recalled in fairy tales, when Krum the Bulgar khan gilded a Roman emperor's skull and used it as a drinking goblet, when the careful and equitable laws of the Romans were displaced by Germanic tribal codes that hearkened back to times before "'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre." As in Gaul (or Britain) during the fifth and even sixth centuries, a few Romanized Celts cultivated good Latin and marital fidelity, while the sturdy Franks took as many women as they could support and preferred the rough tales of their ancestors to the supple lines of Vergil and Statius. Tacitus praised the Germans for what we now might call "family values," but the strength of their social organization lay not in the nuclear family but in the sense of blood and kin that connected them into clans, tribes, and nations.

Our American barbarians are not, of course, anything like those sturdy tribal Germans who would, in a few centuries, discipline their own vigorous customs into something like a civilization. Our postcivilized men and women lack even the healthy instincts of the wild beast: They are more like the feral dogs who know only enough of human beings not to fear them.

The reality is there for anyone to see, if he does not know only what he reads in the paper or sees on the evening news. It is not the gloomy spectacle of public fornicators and reptilian businessmen that should interest us, however. Man, made in the image of God, is a creative creature, even in dissolution. In times of social and moral chaos, when law and discipline and form have disappeared, he will revert to the more primitive customs dictated by the flow of hormones and the force of genetic pressure—the amoral pursuit of individual survival and sexual gratification—and, lacking the mental discipline required to sustain a complex commonwealth, he will have to rediscover some simpler form of organization that will give him the immediate sense of identity provided by barbarian tribes.

In the previous Dark Age, the universal principles of Roman law crumbled, and the old law of blood and status was reintroduced by the invaders. Among the Germans, a man's status was, if not everything, a quality that trumped most considerations of fairness and justice. Kill my brother, whether by malice, self-defense, or accident, and I am obliged to kill you or secure proper compensation, and the laws governing homicide specified that the amount of *wergeld* to be paid was proportionate to the social status of the murder victim. Considerations of kinship, tribal membership, and "feudal" relationship took precedence over fact and fair play. A stranger without powerful friends was nothing; a tribal leader from a powerful clan was everything.

Some minor considerations of status lingered in Anglo-American law down to the end of the 19th century. A man might be held liable for torts committed by his dependents (both children and wife), and aliens, naturalized or not, were discriminated against in many ways. Preference was given to native-born Americans in employment, Sicilian criminals were repatriated to Italy, and no nonnative could become the president of the United States. Even at the end of the 20th century, aliens did not have all the same rights as citizens, though Justice Thurgood Marshall argued that they should.

Marshall was an interesting case: A typical liberal in viewing all men and women as rights-bearing individuals, regardless of the accidents of birth and citizenship, he was, in the more active phase of his career, a single-minded advocate of the rights of one group—namely, his own—over all others. Marshall would, no doubt, have said that all he wanted was equality for Americans of African descent, but equality turned out to mean special privilege after special privilege, from the racially motivated redistricting of congressional districts to minority set-asides to affirmative action. Most of these privileges, it must be said, violated both the federal and state constitutions—a clear indication, to those who had eyes, that our political order was no longer based on the traditions of Anglo-American jurisprudence.

When the American majority acquiesced in a revolution that manifestly damaged their own children, they were making it clear that they, like much of the Roman imperial aristocracy, no longer cared about the people who represented the future of their families and their nation. In that sense, the old America was really dead, not merely doomed, by the time of the Kennedy-Johnson years.

In the short run, European-Americans have been the losers, and government—not blacks or women—has been the big winner. This will be true, even if the concept of reparations is accepted as the logical conclusion—which it is—of the civil-rights movement. There is, of course, no valid "legal" claim, in the sense of Anglo-American or Roman law. General Sherman, who actually wanted to own slaves after the Civil War, had no legal or constitutional right to promise ex-slaves either land or mules, and his illegal acts were overturned (as he knew they would be) after the war. He was no more competent to make a guarantee of reparations than I am.

The historical and legal claims against corporations that benefited from slavery are no better, but it is a wonderful sign of the times that guiltless people can be held responsible for the presumed crimes of their ancestors and predecessors. "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jeremiah 31:29). As a moral and ethical principle, this saying was rejected by the prophets and by Christ. As a fact of life, it cannot be eliminated. Men and women who swap mates or take drugs have children who will pay the price for the parents' sins. And there was a time, even in America, when the children of robber barons and gangsters could not pay their way into decent society.

In modern America, this sounds absurd, precisely because we are incapable of any moral reasoning that does not reduce all ethical and political questions to individuals and the state. Neither Marxists nor Misesians can consider the moral significance of families and kin-groups. We have "liberated" married women from their husbands and children from their

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parents, and we wonder why the institution of the family is crumbling. We even liberate retired people from their children and grandchildren by sending them Social Security checks that enable them to move to dreary trailer parks where the sun shines bright, even in January, deep in the heart of Texas, Arizona, or Florida.

The only conservative response to the collapse of "family values" has been to propose tax remedies to strengthen the nuclear family. The proposals, which are good in themselves, do not address the problem. The nuclear family is an artificial and hypothetical construct based on the very concept of the individual that has destroyed family life. A family, according to the conservative individualists, consists of the more or less permanent bond between man and wife, parents and children. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles are welcome additions to a family gathering, but they are not included in the essential definition. If the family of three-and-one-half individuals gets into trouble, either because the children run wild or because some government busybody disapproves of spanking or homeschooling, the only recourse is to hire a lawyer or call upon a pro-family organization to take up the case.

The nuclear family is a highly fragile social construction. Parents who wish to bring up Christian children in an anti-Christian world soon realize that the odds are against them. The anti-Christian American regime can mobilize all the vast forces of schooling (public and private), the media, and popular culture—to say nothing of the law and the police—in the service of its ideology. Once upon a time, parents, faced with a child running bad, might have sent him out to Granddaddy's farm to work off his energy, or locked him in his room at night, or, failing all else, stopped sparing the rod. Any of these strategies, if applied today, could land the parents in jail.

A husband and wife, even if they are heroic parents who have kicked in their television set and moved to the country, and even if they spend their available time teaching their children Latin at home and dragging them to church twice a week, begin to realize that, if they rely strictly on their own resources, they are going to lose a certain number of their kids, if only temporarily, to the mass culture. So they form homeschooling groups or even start a school in conjunction with their church. These are excellent things to do, but I have watched with my own eyes as well brought-up teenage girls, deeply involved in wholesome and instructive activities, have begun painting their faces and hiking up their skirts to show off their legs. Before long, they are meeting 30-year-old men on the internet and, still worse, asserting their rights. A couple of dozen grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins might be able to surround such a child with the affection, ridicule, and discipline that would preserve her from harm until she reaches the age of reason—which, in America these days, is some time after 30.

From the ancient perspective, a husband and wife and their children represented only a link in the chain that connected ancestors with descendants. The Greeks and Romans had no word for "the family." Instead, they had two sets of words, one (*oikos*, *familia*) that emphasized the household (which could include slaves, hired servants, and various dependent relations), and the other (*genos*, *genus*) that emphasized broader kinship or common ancestry.

Until recently, governments have left nuclear families alone, sensing that they present no threat to the power of the state. However, the builders of powerful states have always feared the strength of the extended family and the clan. Whether in Britain, the Balkans, or the South, clans have been a law unto themselves. This may not always be a good thing, as evidenced by the frequent blood feuds that erupted in Scotland, Montenegro, and Texas: In times of need, however, it is the clan that has the power and the will to stand up for its members when they are oppressed by government.

The Soviet leadership learned this lesson quickly. The first generation of Bolsheviks had learned from Marx that the family was an instrument of class oppression. Although their contempt for the family matched that of Hillary Clinton and other modern leftists, they quickly decided that, while the nuclear family was a useful tool for rearing the state's children, the extended kin networks in Russia and Ukraine were a threat to the total power of the state. Henceforth, Soviet law, while breaking up the extended family, gave protection to what shallow and historically ignorant sociologists like to call the "bourgeois family."

Today, then, faced with the state's stepped-up efforts (though largely unconscious) to destroy the last remnants of Christian civilization, American families are being given very bad advice from evangelical pop psychologists who want them to recreate the Ozzie and Harriet model of the 1950's family. Contrasting the self-fictionalized Ozzie and Harriet with the equally banal but all-too-real Ozzy Osbourne and his wife, conservatives hold up the Nelsons as the ideal suburban family: a dad who did not have to work, a mother who baked cookies all day, two inoffensive children—one of whom was successfully marketed as a rock star. The Nelsons were, in T.S. Eliot's phrase, "decent, godless people." No one believed anything, no one did anything, no one went to church.

Instead of mooning over the Nelsons and the Cleavers, American reactionaries could be looking at reruns of *The Real McCoys*, a series that depicted the tribulations of a displaced Appalachian family trying to run a farm in California. In coping with California and their child, Luke and Kate McCoy were not alone: They had Luke's sister Hassie and Grandpa McCoy to support them, and, after a while, they even incorporated the Mexican farmhand, Pepino, into the family.

Going beyond Walter Brennan and Richard Crenna, American families might take even more valuable lessons from the *real* McCoys of West Virginia, a brave and hardworking people who knew how to support their families and protect them from their enemies. (I mean no disrespect to the Hatfields, even if they were Unionists.) Like all clans, the McCoys prized their freedom and knew that it depended on the efforts and loyalty of the clan, not on government, not on movements, not on counselors.

There is not much left of the McCoys or of any other clan in the developed world, but, as the darkness gathers once again, Christian families had better understand that their freedom and independence will not come from a pro-family tax policy or a legal foundation or a militia group. Those who wish to be free will have to move back to their hometown (or find a new one), drag Grandpa out of the rest home or trailer park where he thinks he is happy, hunt up the cousins they have not seen in ten years, and begin to think of their friends and employees as potential candidates for adoption into the clan they are building. If nothing else, they will form a network of friends with whom they can exchange recipes and share grief. At best, they will found the village that it takes, so we are repeatedly told, to rear a child.

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Clean Sweep

Charles Edward Eaton

The kitchen is so absolutely swept, a confrontational scene:
The sparkling teacups, the kettle, the crouching stove—
Someone has been here with a broom, the stroke was mean.

The table is shining like a little lake of oilcloth,
A surface that excludes the water birds, the rotting rowboat—
The whole house is banked up clean, one knows, no dust, no sloth.

Where are the boots grown muddy on the mountain,
The slicker, steaming, dripping near the stove,
A renegade that seems to say: Where are the orchids and the fountain?

Where, indeed, the smell of tracked-in doubt and dung?—
What is this obsessional concern with brushed-off surface
If all the richest odysseys are left unsung?

This dialogue is dangerous, plays it far too fast and loose—
The mind is slit, as though for slides, admit it now, forever,
And pitting kitchen-clean, tabled seas, orchids, fountains, is a bit obtuse.

You go home, abraded by the neighbor's brush and broom—
Click. Click. You, too, may harry all the richest pictures
If you do not hold a lover to your heart in an upstairs room.

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by Philip Jenkins

Of Priests and Peducators

Over the past decade, I have been involved in public debate over the problem of sexual abuse by Catholic priests, and that experience has taught me a great deal about the way people come to understand—or, rather, misunderstand—social problems. My point is simple enough. While some priests have undoubtedly been abusive, and a few have been criminal predators of the first order, there is no evidence that Catholic clergy are more likely than any other social group to abuse children. At many times, my position has been desperately unpopular because it runs flat contrary to what "everyone knows," which is that the priesthood is seething with perversion and pedophilia. But how exactly does "everyone know" this? Nobody is claiming to have a detailed comparative chart of abuse rates in different professions, on which priests soar off the charts. People believe in the evil nature of the priesthood because they hear so much about those wrongs, while they hear very little about other horrors committed by other groups, religious or secular. What I have tried to explain is that what we hear about a given group, and what the media report, depends largely on how people expect that group to behave—in other words, on our assumptions, our prejudices.

This issue of expectation is critical. Imagine a hypothetical series of events in which some other group might be labeled similarly as real or potential abusers. For the sake of argument, take public-school teachers. (I am assuming the rate of sexual misconduct among teachers is not significantly higher than that for the population at large). Quite frequently, cases come to light of teachers involved in sexual misconduct or online seduction, trading child pornography, and so on. We generally see these cases as isolated examples of individual deviance. But the stories are surprisingly abundant, and newspapers and magazines have published exposés suggesting a widespread underlying problem. A 1998 survey of newspaper archives nationwide by the nonsensationalist magazine *Education Week* found 244 reported cases involving teacher-student relationships in a six-month period, with behaviors varying from "unwanted touching to sexual relationships and serial rape." That represents over nine cases per week.

Of course, these are only the reported cases, and some activists feel that many other incidents remain undetected or unreported. The website of the advocacy group Survivors of Educator Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Emerge claims that "The best estimate is that 15 percent of students will be sexually abused by a member of the school staff during their school career." The organization's president complains, "Schools don't report rumors. Schools don't report allegations. Schools don't report teacher resignations under suspicious circumstances." No central clearinghouse collects and analyzes such incidents. As a result, there are scandalous cases of teachers who have run into trouble in one school system moving to a new area, where they resume their abusive careers. One investigative study is titled "'Passing the Trash' by School Districts Frees Sexual Predators to Hunt Again." It all sounds very much like the worst image of priestly abuse before the recent upsurge of clerical scandals, though, at the time of this writing, abusive teachers rarely register on the popular consciousness.

But things may be changing. One of the main scholars working in this area is Charol Shakeshaft, whose book *Sexual Abuse in Schools* will be published in January 2003 (by Jossey-Bass). I wonder if her work will detonate a new social problem reminiscent of what happened with priests 20 years ago? As a thought-exercise, let us imagine the pattern that this new problem might follow. Imagine that civil lawsuits started exposing cases not just of actual criminality among teachers but of internal complaints and disciplinary proceedings. Obviously, the number of cases that came to public attention would increase dramatically. At that stage, the media might focus on an emerging social problem, which would be painted in the most sinister terms. Cases involving teachers and older teenagers would be reported alongside stories of child pornography and molestation and presented as part of a single social menace. Media reports would tend to lump together minor acts of harassment with consensual affairs between teachers and students, and even with forcible rape. Perhaps the issue would be framed in terms of memorable phrases—"peducators," for example. Since teachers are so numerous, even a tiny proportion of offenders would produce an impressive-sounding absolute number of cases, probably far higher than for priests or other clergy.

With the image of the pedophile teacher firmly established in the public mind, further litigation would generate ever-larger numbers of known and suspected cases. The news media and talk shows would give the issue daily coverage; the matter would become the subject of jokes on comedy shows, a theme in television dramas. Sensing the new public mood, individuals would be encouraged to come forward and report instances of victimization, often from the distant past. Reporting would encourage further reporting, litigation would stir more litigation, in a spiral that has no logical ending. Numbers beget numbers. With so many cases surfacing, experts would debate the circumstances that created such a dysfunctional culture in the schools and the teaching profession. The scale and seriousness of the problem would be so obvious a part of everyday discourse that any attempt to challenge public perceptions would be viewed as callous or self-serving—almost like trying to defuse concerns about "pedophile priests."

The lesson is straightforward. If you expect a group to be villainous, you will generally find ample confirmation of that view. And once a problem becomes established, once it becomes a social fact, not much fire is needed to generate a very large amount of dense smoke.

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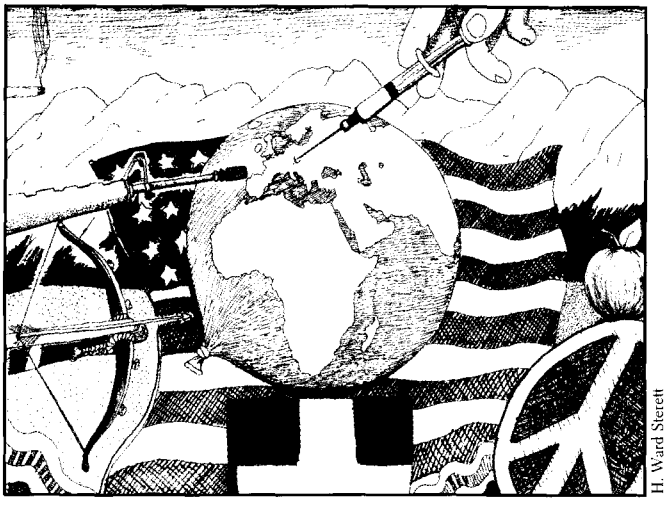
The Family Against the Globalists

Lederhosen versus MTV

by E. Michael Jones



I once knew a lady who ran for governor of the state of Pennsylvania on the promise that, if elected, she would run the state like a family. Unfortunately, she lost the election, so we will never know what that would have been like. (I am tempted to say that it would be impossible to run Pennsylvania any worse than it is being run.)

Is the family perfect? Yes: It is perfect in the same way that the Catholic Church is perfect, which is to say that it is perfectly suitable for achieving the end for which it was created. That does not mean, however, that it can fulfill functions not appropriate to it. The family is not the same as the state, just as the family is not the same as the individual or the ethnic group. We are all familiar with what happens when ethnic groups take control of governments in such places as Africa or Detroit. We are probably also familiar with families who defend the criminal behavior of their own members, no matter how heinous. (You can admire them for their family loyalty, if not for their moral probity.) What these have in common is that each assigns to a natural institution tasks or characteristics that are completely inappropriate to it.

On the last day of the tenth annual Mut Zur Ethik conference in Feldkirch, Austria, Col. Robert Hickson of the Special Forces University in Florida; Eva-Marie Foellmer, a leading figure in Mut Zur Ethik; Tomasz Kazmierski, a Polish physicist now living in England; and I were climbing the Rothorn, a mountain in Switzerland, atop which (at its almost 3,000-meter-high peak), in typically Swiss fashion, stands a restaurant. I had spoken during the conference on the use of television as a weapon in the global culture wars, but most of my talk had focused on the United States' impending war with Iraq and whether the Swiss model of direct democracy might help us avoid such wars.

As we climbed, Colonel Hickson began to berate the Swiss for taking thousands of gun emplacements out of operation in the mountains. His point was not that the gun emplacements themselves were so important but that their absence indicated (in his mind, at least) a withdrawal from the idea of communal self-defense and a citizen militia as the backbone of armed Swiss neutrality. He wondered aloud whether the Swiss were still in a position to defend themselves.

I replied that artillery is useless in a culture war. If the Swiss were hoping that artillery would save them from the dangers of globalization, they were as deluded as the American conservatives of the 60's who stood with their eyes fixed on the Fulda Gap, waiting for the Soviet invasion that never came, while American culture was subverted by people acting behind their backs.

During one of the breaks at the conference in Feldkirk, I was invited to lunch by two men, one of whom told the story of how the 200th-anniversary celebration at Switzerland's oldest *gymnasium* had been marred by African drug dealers selling narcotics to the students. Peter Schaller, one of my hosts during my stay in Switzerland, teaches at the *gymnasium*, and he confirmed the accuracy of his colleague's account. Drugs are still illegal in Switzerland, but the police will not enforce the laws if the drug in question is hashish.

So what are the Swiss to do? What would Wilhelm Tell do (WWWTD)? Would he organize discussions about the dangers of drugs? Having heard so much over the past few days about the Swiss idea of direct democracy, I suggested that an appropriate application of those principles would be for the faculty and parents to go out into the schoolyard and tell the drug dealers to leave, and, if persuasion did not succeed, to remove them physically from the premises. (Actually, I said that the fac-

E. Michael Jones is the editor of Culture Wars *and the author, most recently, of* The Slaughter of Cities: Urban Renewal as Ethnic Cleansing *(St. Augustine's Press).*

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ulty should tell the dealers to "get the f--k out of here.")

You can take the boy out of Philadelphia, but you can't take Philadelphia out of the boy. There I was in the mountains of Switzerland, having a Philadelphia moment. Maybe it was the thin air, or maybe I found myself momentarily swept away by the idea of actually doing something to stop the all-but-universal subversion of social order. (Maybe that explains my unfortunate choice of vocabulary.) I cannot, for the life of me, imagine engaging in a debate with some Swiss leftie wearing tiny glasses and an Arab scarf about the dangers of drugs. I could sooner see myself taking drugs, squatting on the abandoned tracks of the Letten Bahnhof, veins bulging in my forearm, ready to shoot up. At that moment, however, I thought that Swiss direct democracy did have something to offer, because I could imagine myself standing in a schoolyard, like those where I used to hang out in Philadelphia, telling someone to "get the f--k out of here," and being willing to use force to make that stick. Maybe it was the intoxication of seeing myself as a latter-day Wilhelm Tell, but I felt encouraged by the example I had raised. Eva-Marie, however, was not amused.

"You're raising your voice," she said.

Eva-Marie's response struck me as a particularly schoolmarmish thing to say. It was like telling me that my zipper was down. It may have been true, but I did not understand how it was relevant to what I was saying. We were talking about two completely different orders of being. Needless to say, I was annoyed. For all I know, lack of oxygen was causing me to raise my voice. I suspect, though, that it was anger—anger at seeing one more bastion of ethnic culture destroyed from within, the casualties smiling as they died. The issue, as far as I was concerned, was whether the Swiss idea of direct democracy had any relevance to drug dealers at that country's oldest *gymnasium*, and the fact that I was raising my voice—if, in fact, I was raising my voice—was irrelevant. What about the principles? Did my application flow from them or not? We will never know, because Eva-Marie's response effectively ended the discussion. I strode ahead by myself—lest I raise my voice again—and concentrated on the cows with bells around their necks.

Later, Eva-Marie suggested that I share my idea with Peter Schaller. Schaller, to my surprise, agreed that my suggestion was perfectly consistent with Swiss traditions. Eva-Marie could not see this, in his opinion, because she was a German. Schaller mentioned that the drug dealers were probably armed, to which I responded that every Swiss man has a military-issue weapon, which he could carry with him into the schoolyard to make sure that the drug dealers understood the seriousness of his intentions. Schaller replied that the problem is not the application of Swiss principles; the problem is that the faculty at the *gymnasium* are divided on the drug issue. Many of his colleagues take drugs; even more are willing to defend drug use as culturally appropriate for some. In other words, the problem is that large segments of the faculty have been inculcated with the ideas of the 60's, and, as a result, there is no consensus among them. If Schaller, in Swiss fashion, were to show up at school with his Swiss army-issue weapon, he—not the drug dealers—would end up in jail. Is action possible without consensus? And is consensus possible among a faculty that includes drug users, drug justifiers, and two flaming homosexuals? Not even Wilhelm Tell could make *Eidgenossen* ("oath comrades") out of that motley crew.

This is why the globalists promote moral disorder. If there is no moral consensus, action is impossible; if action is impossible, then, *a fortiori*, resistance is impossible. That the Swiss Germans named their organization "Mut Zur Ethik" ("courage to be moral") is a tacit recognition of that fact. Ultimately, the issue is not whether direct democracy is a model for the rest of the world. We may have reached the point where even the Swiss cannot apply it to the greatest problems threatening Switzerland. In the absence of a moral consensus, Swiss direct democracy is no more effective in a culture war than the silent artillery batteries in the mountains above Sargans.

It is time to embrace a coherent, genuine conservatism that can meet globalism head-on and provide some protection from its most virulent forms. What we need, in other words, is a philosophical *lingua franca* for antiglobalism.

It is time to stop mistaking the part for the whole. It is time to embrace a coherent, genuine conservatism (as opposed to neoconservatism, 19th-century liberalism, free-marketism, libertarianism, and all of the other forms of the English ideology that are now being imposed on the rest of the world by globalist fiat) that can meet globalism head-on and provide some protection from its most virulent forms. What we need, in other words, is a philosophical *lingua franca* for antiglobalism. In order to be both universal and particular enough to be effective, antiglobalism will have to be based on nature, not on ideology. *Gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit.* (If grace builds on nature, then we will have to build on it as well, if we hope to be effective.)

The goal of globalization is isolation through the manipulation of passion, because isolation is the necessary condition for exploitation, whether financial or sexual or cultural. This violates the social nature of man, because, as Aristotle writes, "Man is a being made for social life." In other words, the exploiters have to work against nature to succeed. That is why the homosexual has become the globalist model of the ideal citizen. His life is lived in defiance of nature, and, as a result, he is completely isolated and easily controlled. In order to evade the snares of globalism, the clever individual must be unhomosexual in his dealings with his fellow man—which is to say, not a sexual predator (or addict), not grandiose, not narcissistic, not in rebellion against nature, and, ultimately, in control of his passions.

In order to protect himself from exploitation, the individual must create walls of defense, and the first wall is the moral order. As Saint Augustine writes, "a man has as many masters as he has vices." Man is a rational animal who can seek the good through exercising reason and free will. Man achieves the good first by acting according to the moral law, by implementing practical reason as an individual. He then achieves the good in

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association with a spouse by founding an *oikos* or household. He then achieves it as a member of an *ethnos* or nation; and, finally, he achieves that perfection as a member of a *polis* or state. Thus, the full scale of how man achieves the good follows an ascending order: *ethos*, *oikos*, *ethnos*, *polis*. Any truly antiglobalist conservatism must be based on this hierarchy. That would mean promoting morals, family, and ethnicity at home and among others and not trying to impose on every other ethnicity of the world some sort of utopian magic formula like the "free market" or "democracy" of the Swiss, Wilsonian, or any other sort.

The hierarchy of *ethos*, *oikos*, and *ethnos* corresponds roughly to the stages of human development. *Ethos* helps to form character; it is the main issue for a man from childhood into his teenage years. If reason does not take control of passion at this point in his life, his character simply will not form. If his character does not form, then it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for him to link his efforts with other men. The result is the ghetto mentality we find in housing projects. Large segments of that population become sexually active before will and reason have formed the habits of character. As a result, the will is permanently stunted, and the self is not disciplined or ordered enough to carry out anything but the most rudimentary tasks in life. Such a person can go to the store and buy a gallon of milk, but he cannot get a GED or commercial drivers' license. Like the homosexual, the ghetto dweller is, in many ways, the ideal citizen of a consumer culture. In one respect, he is completely docile, but, in another, completely out of control. He can consume, but he cannot produce, and so he has to be given money in order to be of use to the culture. The ideal consumer is not the ideal employee, and social engineers have been unable to square that circle.

Oikos is obviously the concern of people who have just married and are forming their families. Once the social engineers triumphed over the ethnic group in the 60's, they turned their attention to the family and, in some instances, succeeded in bringing large segments of America's families under political control. As in most of the Enlightenment's projects, the operation was a success, but the patient died. The campaign to turn housing projects into birth-control clinics failed to lower black fertility, but it largely destroyed the black family. Feminism, as the implementer of abortion and birth control, had a similarly devastating effect on the middle-class family during the 70's. But, unlike ethnic America, *oikos* proved too resilient to destroy completely. Families, withdrawing from the culture through such movements as homeschooling, proved too diffuse to control, and the nuclear bond between husband and wife proved much tougher to crack than the ethnic bond among recent European immigrants. Like the atomic nucleus, the nuclear family released so much destructive energy when it was split that even the social engineers began to have second thoughts. Inner-city devastation was largely the result of social engineers splitting the black nuclear family to try to control the "threat" posed by black demographics. This social tinkering created incredible devastation, because the chain reaction that followed rapidly got out of control. Because the social engineers failed to take control of the family, the biggest issue became the unresolved conflict between *oikos* and *polis*, since *polis* had effectively abolished *ethnos* in the United States during the 50's and 60's.

Ethnos is the *Kulturtraeger*, the bearer of culture. It, not *oikos*, determines language, clothing, food, *etc.* The problem in America is that, after the abolition of *ethnos*, *oikos* became defenseless and unable to determine its own identity. Instead, we are forever naively importing pseudoethnicities into the *oikos*. Clothing is especially important in this regard. Notre Dame sweatshirts, Harley Davidson jackets, Britney Spears pants, Michael Jordan shoes—all of these are pseudoethnicities, which carry with them covert forms of cultural control.

If we compare Europe and America, we find different variations and different weakness and strengths that correspond to some part of this scheme. *Oikos* is strong in America, but *ethnos* is weak or nonexistent because of the shallowness of America's cultural roots and the ruthlessness with which government-sponsored social engineering has attacked them. As a result, we have homeschooling families hiding out in the woods (or, worse, the suburbs), trying to piece together a cultural lifeboat out of some Great Books program. These families should be praised for their willingness to resist the globalist culture, but they are handicapped by their isolation from any lived ethnic *Kulturtraeger* that could support them.

In Europe, on the other hand, *ethnos* is strong, but *oikos* is weak, because *ethos* is weak. (One result may be the neopagan revival in Europe that is seen as a reaction to globalism.) This is manifested most clearly in Europe's dismal birthrate. Unlike the American homeschooling Robinson Crusoes, the situation in Europe is typified by the Bavarian Catholic girl who lives in the midst of still-vibrant ethnic symbols, clothing, *Volksmusik*, and humanely planned cities, yet invites her boyfriend to spend the night with her under the approving eyes of her parents. Or, better still, by the naked hermaphrodites dozing in the sun in the English Garden in Munich. The largest problem in both America and Europe is the disconnect between *ethos*, *oikos*, and *ethnos*, and the fallacy of mistaking the part for the whole—a fallacy that flows from this disconnect. That is why we need a coherent antiglobalist *lingua franca*, which would allow collaboration by letting nature take its course.

A good place to start would be a concerted effort to get people in both America and Europe not only to turn off their televisions but to get rid of them completely. The average European or American does not understand that television functions as the prime instrument of political control in the globalist New World Order. In a recent article on immigration, Stephen Steinlight (senior fellow at the American Jewish Committee), after describing television as "the Jewish industry par excellence," explained the role that MTV is to play in the globalist system. "MTV, for better or for worse," he asserts, "will prove more powerful with young Muslim immigrants than the mullahs." He forgot to add that it will also prove more powerful among young Bavarians than the Catholic priests, and more powerful among young Alabamians than Southern Baptist preachers. He forgot to add that MTV is a form of cultural colonization. His point, however, remains clear: Television atomizes and demoralizes as a prelude to control and exploitation.

People who do not watch TV spend more time with their families. Families who do not watch TV spend more time doing things with other families who do not watch TV. That means a resurgence of ethnic identity. That means more Bavarians wearing *Lederhosen* and *Dirndlkleider* and fewer dressing like Britney Spears. And that means more cultural independence and more local resistance to the rising globalist Antichrist.

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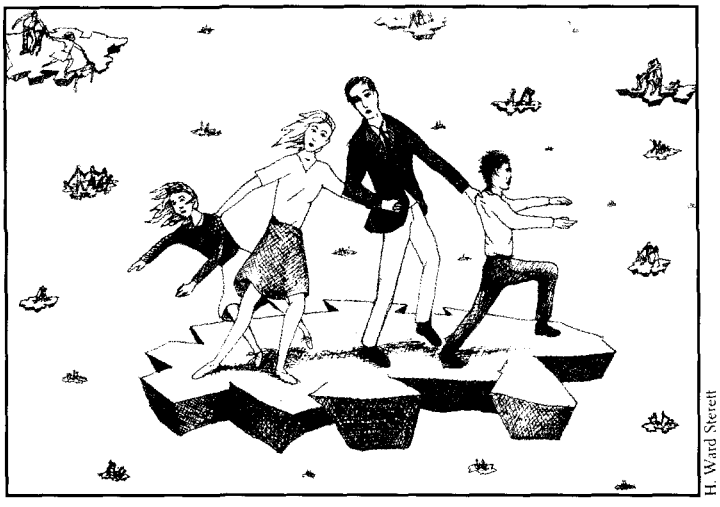
Molecular Families

Dismantling the Family Cubicles

by Douglas Wilson



H. Ward Sterett

As we look around at the pandemonium that characterizes the *circus maximus* of our once-great culture, there are few things as striking as the large number of what we might call "disconnected pockets of sanity," otherwise known as nuclear families. And the fact that they are disconnected means that the sanity is illusory. When it comes to fundamental cultural issues, there is no such thing as neutrality—but, as many commentators have pointed out, a large number of Christians in the West have been culturally neutered.

Many have blamed individualism for all of this, saying that, when it comes to confrontations with the monolithic state, individualistic autonomy has been made the sole locus of resistance, and, consequently, that resistance has been completely outmaneuvered. A consuming loyalty to the state will only be effectively countered by healthier loyalties, and loyalty to a *regimen mei* is, of course, not up to the task. I once spoke with a non-Christian libertarian who did not believe that Christians were doing their share in the fight against statism. In our debate, we agreed that the central engine driving the propagation of statism was the government school system, and, in the course of our discussion, I asked him how many private schools libertarians had established, compared to the number of private academies that have been built by Christians. A hearty dislike of statist encroachments on *me* does not a civilization make.

The growing Christian education movement—however heartening it is as a starting point—does not indicate that we have worked out all our problems, which stem not just from individualism but from fragmentation. We are potsherds contending with the potsherds of the earth (Isaiah 45:9). While this is certainly better than contending with the Potter, we remain, nonetheless, fragmented bits of pottery trying to hold water. We have hidden our fragmented status from ourselves and have come to believe that larger potsherds are not shattered like the smaller ones.

Many conservative Christians reject *strict* individualism, which is evidenced by their intact and thriving families or their connection to tightly knit local churches. Consequently, they assume that, because they are immediately surrounded by people they love and are committed to, they are not guilty of individualism. But although they do not go through life as detached individuals, they *do* go through life as members of detached families and as members of detached churches. This problem requires a more accurate name: I suggest *independency*.

Our fragmented independency can manifest itself at different levels. Individuals can exhibit it, as can families and churches. In conservative Protestant circles, there has been a strong resurgence in emphasis on the family—which has been wonderful—but many unhealthy assumptions are manifested along with this. One clear tendency has been to absolutize the family as the beginning, middle, and end of all cultural endeavors. The result is a new "individualism," with the family now serving as an overgrown individual. Thus, not only do we have the healthy return of such practices as homeschooling, but we also find such less-praiseworthy observances as home medicine, home churches, and home brain surgery in the garage. A milder form of this is found in the attempt to return to the "nuclear family" of the Eisenhower years. But a return to the middle-class values of Ozzie and Harriet, and a vast tract of suburbia with little pink houses for you and me, with each father (who knows best) mowing his own lawn, will not build or sustain a civilization, either. These families will all be detached from one another when it comes to the permanent things, and, thus, their similarities will either be superficial—they all have green garden hoses—or their *substantive* coherence will be

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found in the fact that each receives a 1099. They do not connect with one another in any way that challenges the hegemony of the state. In many ways, the growth of the state in our country has been the result not so much of tyrannical scheming as of nature abhorring a vacuum. Because individuals, families, and churches have abandoned their divinely ordained roles, which naturally restrain many statist encroachments, nature has simply taken its course.

In the face of state encroachments, we now find that we have no single voice that can speak to the magistrate about what he is doing. Rather than recognize our own dogmatic commitment to fragmentation as the culprit, we organize ourselves according to accepted statist procedures. And this is how we have arrived at the spectacle of families and churches lobbying for "traditional values" in Washington, D.C., in the same manner as Big Tobacco, the gun lobby, N.O.W., trial lawyers, and pharmaceutical companies. Our central government does not know how to respond to the Church of Jesus Christ (never having had the pleasure of an introduction), but it does know how to play *any* lobbying organization like a fiddle. That is why, when traditionalists head off to Washington to try to lobby for what they *think* is a conservative agenda, they always find themselves with their shirts pulled over their heads and their socks rolled down.

The elevation of independency to the status of a virtue is our greatest difficulty, because it is so largely unrecognized. And when it is recognized, it is considered our strength, not our central weakness. Families that are intact but free-floating are incapable of building true communities with the worship of God at the center.

And this is why we must learn to repent of our virtues. If we refuse, then we will continue to embrace the "virtue" of independency, blissfully unaware of the fact that our nostalgic views of a bygone healthy America simply represent earlier stages of the disease. Descrying familial vice is easy. Current advocates emphasize the internal connectedness of the family, and, as far as this goes, it is understandable. They are almost always right about the facts of the case: Divorce does scramble the kids, infidelity does destroy marriages, child neglect is exquisite cruelty, and so on. But such things only explain why individual families fall apart. They cannot explain why intact families are so easily ignored when they speak to the problem.

We need to replace our ideal of the atomistic nuclear family with a new appreciation for the molecular family. The family was designed by God to function in this fashion, and when this design is honored, the molecules can become quite complex—and strong. In contrast, today's family is thought of in atomistic terms, even by self-described conservatives. But a town full of atomistic families, regardless of how "healthy" each individual family is, will have all the cultural solidity and structure of a bean bag. A church full of atomistic families will come to see those families as expendable and interchangeable tithing units. Those churches, in turn, have no accountability to speak of with regard to the broader Church and are happy to keep their status as conventicles and schism shops.

Genuine Christian culture depends upon molecular complexity, which, in turn, depends upon families that are willing to give up atomistic autonomy. This surrender of autonomy, this godly submission, is routinely opposed by conservatives as the first step down the slippery slope toward tyranny and despotism, collectivism and blue helmets, not to mention blue ruin. And so we are left with happy, intact nuclear families that are little more than Federal Reserve note-spreading leisure units, Winnebago included. Or we find more radical homeschooling families out in the woods, refusing to allow their federal massa to dictate the content of their curriculum but also refusing to live in genuine community with neighbors or to submit themselves to the authority of an orthodox church.

Molecular complexity cannot exist unless Christians accept the restraints that every culture imposes on the details of everyday life. If we do not submit to the restraints offered by our neighbors, our parents, lifetimes lived in one place, our maternal uncles two blocks away, our minister, the baptismal font, our fellow parishioners, the Lord's Table, the churchyard where we long to be buried, and our grandchildren at the dinner table, then we will likely be bound by those imposed by the DEA, the EPA, and the IRS. It is not whether we will accept cultural restraints, but which restraints we will accept.

The culture of modernity treats all its governed units as interchangeable parts of a machine. We have compromised with the culture of modernity by thinking of ourselves in the same way. In *Living Machines*, E. Michael Jones shows how our buildings have been designed with this interchangeability in mind. Every inhabitant of every cubicle with a Dilbert cartoon posted on one of his walls has probably thought about this, perhaps daily. In the older order of Christendom, young men would join a regiment along with other boys with whom they had grown up and go to war under the command of a man they had known all their lives. Today, they join the service, are thrown into a randomization process overseen by the Pentagon, and wind up in the 82nd Airborne—but it could just as easily have been somewhere else. Our children go to college and get a certain number of credit hours from a sociology professor, credits which are interchangeable with the sociology credit hours being dispensed by somebody else—anybody else. All our rock bands parade the same interchangeable, alienated schtick, which is why they all have names like *Rage Against the Machine*. An Eddie Bauer store in a mall in Seattle looks suspiciously like an Eddie Bauer store in Des Moines. Everything is interchangeable, and we are a civilization of unitarian dullards.

The genius of true Christian culture is that, in it, nothing is interchangeable. Wives are not interchangeable, which is why we marry for life. Neighborhoods are not interchangeable, nor churches, nor grandparents, nor local histories. The more we connect with those around us, and the longer we do so, the more likely it is that we will develop a true *cultural* resistance to the encroachments of the state. We have not done this, so far, because we have been trying to fight the culture wars without any culture. This is as problematic as trying to engage in tank warfare without tanks. What we *thought* was the culture we were defending was actually a set of traditionalist consumer preferences, which means nothing more than the fact that *Amazon.com* does not suggest that you buy pornographic books based on your past purchases.

These conservative consumer patterns are not cultural because they neglect the center of all true human culture—the Incarnation—which summons us to be rooted in the particular. We need to meditate on the fact that we refer to Jesus *of Nazareth*. The Son of God has a hometown. One woman is His Mother, and all other women are not. With the deepest reverence, we must admit that the Son of God has two particular hands and ten particular toes. And with the arrival of this glory, all the abstract systems of Hellenism came tumbling to the

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ground. The Word became *flesh* and *dwelt* among us. Among the many other things the Incarnation brings to us, should it not teach *us* to "dwell among us" as well?

Families, of course, should be internally healthy. Husbands should support and honor their wives, wives should respect and support their husbands, parents should nurture their children, and children should obey and love their parents. Although this is a first step, not an end in itself, it is still a necessary first step. We cannot make a good omelet with rotten eggs. But assuming the eggs to be good, what then? As we consider our strategic situation, I would suggest that families consider their "molecular connections" in two principal areas: The first has to do with the household and the Church, and the second involves life outside of the sanctuary.

All life necessarily centers on worship, and that which is central in any life is that which is being worshiped, whether the true God or idols. It is the duty of Christians to see to it that the Triune God, not the various petty baals of modernity, is the object of our worship. This means finding a church that is *not* trying to attract religious consumers with a thumping worship band. It means rejecting the deathly irrelevance of those churches that lust after contemporary relevance. As C.S. Lewis put it, all that is not eternal is eternally out of date. It means remembering the objectivity of baptism. America's Christian culture has been anabaptist for two centuries, which has meant that the Church is thought of as a volunteer organization—and this is the root of ecclesiastical independency. I say this knowing that many of my Baptist brethren have been great in the Kingdom of Heaven; for all that, however, our nagging cultural dislocations remain. Everyone who is baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is a member of the Covenant, and such things should be cheerfully imposed on our children. (My wife and I "imposed" all sorts of things on our children—their last name, their American citizenship, their faith in Jesus Christ, and dinner, among others.) Baptism is not a badge indicating that the recipient is a member of God's volunteer corps, but a sign that a person is a member of God's *people*. And finally, churches with cultural integrity will hold fast to the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon. These were the creeds that were fashioned in the Church's last great controversy with polytheistic multiculturalism, and they contain great wisdom.

The second area of practical response concerns family choices about schools for their children, jobs and vocation, towns to live in, and so forth. We should try to resist bopping around the country to take a new job every two years, in order to move up the career ladder. And we should reject job opportunities that would bring our families to a community where the worship of God is deficient, corrupt, or nonexistent. Children should be brought up in such a way that they would assume that they will live and die in the same town where their grandchildren will also live and die.

Despite all these problems, I remain optimistic. It is still possible to return to what Chesterton called the "old patriotism of the parish." Optimism, however, is not the same thing as wishing, and until some of these issues come together in our families, towns, and churches, we will continue to have the cultural vitality of a dead cow in the Rio Grande.

Small Blessings

Charles Edward Eaton

If the breeze has the breath of a furnace, the late sun scorch,
Count your blessings you are screened in against flies, mosquitoes:
There is scent of gardenia on the summer porch.

You are sipping lemonade or minted tea—
Imagine a view down into the valley where cool has settled,
Or, better still, fling wide your vision on a vista to the sea.

Arm in arm, the rich imagination and the real—
Truth, the deepest truth knows they love each other secretly:
The day rests somewhere in you on an even keel.

The trick is not to live too far beyond your scope:
Some tea, sweet biscuits, the flower's scent,
And always that little ship inside named "Hope."

The drink sustains—the sea or valley scene, a winner—
Hold on, hold on gently to incremental living:
Without a doubt, you will sail as far as dinner.

After dinner, a haven rich with cargo, promised sleep—
There is a lullaby in clean white sheets and scented air:
Fact, fiction knew all along their blended task looked shallow but went down deep.

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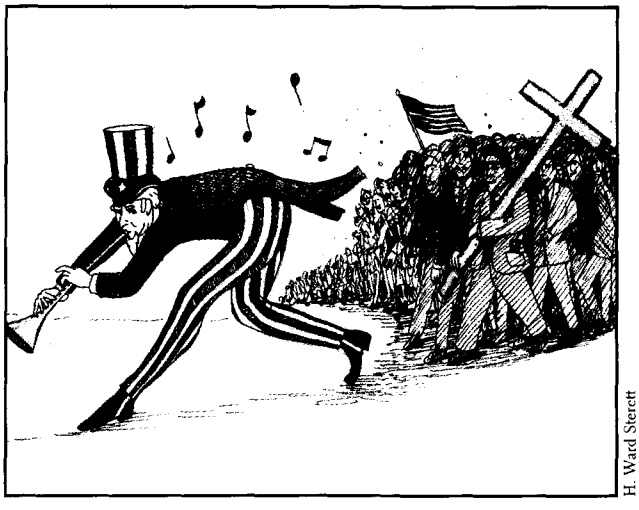
Pro-Family, Pro-State?

Thirty Pieces of Silver

by Doug Bandow



H. Ward Sterett

Freedom is under serious assault today. Government takes and spends nearly half of America's income. Regulation further extends the power of the state in virtually every area of people's lives. Increasing numbers of important, personal decisions are made by some public functionary, more often than not based in Washington, D.C.

Virtue, too, seems to be losing ground daily. Moral decline is evident throughout American society. The legal and political systems are increasingly based on irresponsibility and *de facto* theft. Families and communities are extraordinarily fragile, if they form at all. Popular culture celebrates many of humanity's worst attributes.

Alas, at this critical time, some family advocates who emphasize virtue seem ready to toss liberty overboard. Indeed, some have become advocates of government expansion, especially of the national government, in the name of saving the family.

Virtue cannot exist without freedom, without the right to make moral choices. Coerced acts of conformity with some moral norm, however good, do not represent virtue; compliance with that moral norm must be voluntary.

Still, one could imagine that Uncle Sam could help save the family. Not that such an issue, obviously, is a priority in Washington, D.C. Political leaders like Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich, and Ted Kennedy, for example, seem unlikely defenders of the family. At the very least, they would not seem to be the first people upon whom we would want to rely.

That does not matter, however, to many conservative and, especially, religious activists. In the triumph of hope over experience, they continue to try to use and expand the central state in the vain hope that it will encourage stable families and communities.

Obviously, opinions vary among those who speak on behalf of the family, and not all want ever-expanding government, especially at the national level. But some of the most prominent religious activists seem to have become captivated by Washington—or, at least, they favor expanded government in areas that could cause serious harm to families over the long term.

For instance, Gary Bauer, former president of the Family Research Council and former presidential candidate, and now head of American Values, is, along with other conservative Christian leaders, pressing for larger government in a variety of areas. Some are unrelated to the family. The expanded state that would result, however, is likely to redound to harm the family. For instance, some Christian "pro-family" activists have adopted such foreign-policy positions as a tight embrace of Israel and continued financial subsidies to that country; war against Iraq and any number of other nations, sometimes in the name of the "War on Terrorism," and sometimes for other reasons; higher military spending and renewed conscription; and trade restrictions against China and other nations.

Whatever the specific justification offered for any one of these, they would collectively guarantee a more expensive, more expansive state, which would be more inclined to intrude in more people's lives. Such measures would raise the costs of goods purchased from overseas. They would also create a less stable, more dangerous world, in which terrorism would be more likely to afflict American families.

Restricting the importation of clothing and shoes, for instance, poses a particular burden on poorer people. More seriously, war against a series of nations backed by a larger military would obviously be costly—and the very families supposedly represented by these activists will have to pay for the weapons and man the military. Even more disruptive would be a draft, which would transfer decision-making authority over some of the most basic aspects of family life to Washington.

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Moreover, increased U.S. support for Israel and war against a variety of Muslim states will only inflame further Islamic hatred of the United States. Some people might always hate America because of her economic and political freedoms (as well as the degeneracy that too often flows from those freedoms), but they are likely to try to kill Americans, and die trying, only as part of a concrete political dispute.

This is evident in such countries as Greece, Ireland, and Spain, which have suffered from violent terrorism, as well as countries like India, Israel, and Sri Lanka, which have suffered from suicidal terrorism. One could argue that the intrinsic benefits from such policies might justify the cost. But the consequences are sharply anti-family.

Even more harmful are some of the policies advocated *in the name of the family*. For instance, Gary Bauer has helpfully backed a simpler, flatter income tax. At the same time, however, he opposes Social Security reform, which would allow workers to create their own accounts, which they would control. Families would receive a higher rate of return *and* own the principal. Yet, curiously, Bauer criticized the idea, on the grounds of protecting the family: "[N]o matter what the market does, why do we think the nation will be better off by forcing workers to put their money into stock rather than, say, spending it on rearing children?"

One can criticize Social Security privatization for any number of reasons—but for being anti-family? Bauer has never explained why it is better for the government to take people's money rather than to let them invest it. It is hard to imagine that millions of parents, left with more of their own earnings by the federal government, would suddenly plant themselves in front of stock tickers and ignore their kids. Indeed, half of American families currently invest in the stock market. Presumably, Bauer thinks they should all sell, hand their cash over to Washington, and let Tom Daschle and Denny Hastert take care of Americans' retirement futures.

Even if Social Security theoretically frees up time for the family, it forces parents to work longer to make up for its paltry return, which has turned negative for many new workers. In short, the current system leaves people with less in retirement earnings and no nest egg to pass on to their children—which hardly seems family-friendly.

Domestic measures formally dedicated to strengthening the family are also problematic. Parents can obviously use education and counsel, which James Dobson, head of Focus on the Family, emphasizes. Although he has signed onto the "back Israel regardless of anything" movement, his primary activities tend to be nonpolitical. Other activists, however, look more to Washington for answers. Even though some of their proposals might temporarily help the family, they would inevitably strengthen the federal government, and, thus, the end result would be to hurt the family.

Take, for instance, the Defense of Marriage Act. The most obvious institution to define marriage is the Church. The most obvious government institution to register marriages is the state government. Nothing in the federal Constitution empowers the national government to set marital policy. Once we allow Congress to define marriage in a "pro-family" manner, what is to prevent a future Congress from changing that definition to satisfy, for instance, homosexual activists or polygynous Muslims?

Currently, Washington uses money under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to promote marriage. Dollars have flowed out to a number of states for counseling, workshops, and other services. In September alone, Arizona, Oklahoma, and West Virginia collected grants; the Bush administration, backed by religious conservatives, hopes to distribute $300 million per year for this purpose.

Similarly, some pro-family activists have lobbied for federal sex-education funding for sexual-abstinence programs. Republican control of Congress yielded some dollars to tell children not to have sex; the Bush administration is hoping to dedicate as much money for abstinence programs as the federal government currently does for other sex-education approaches. Here, too, control of millions of dollars is at stake.

Yet the very notion that Uncle Sam should tell people when to marry and to have sex is one that would have shocked the Founding Fathers. If the federal government is going to spend the money, then, arguably, devoting it to marriage and abstinence initiatives is better than spending it on the alternatives. But the more basic issue is whether such programs are appropriate.

Marriage and abstinence are good things, but they are best promoted within the family and by the community. At most, there might be an argument for action by local and state governments. It is not appropriate, however, for Washington to set one policy for more than 280 million Americans. Moreover, allowing Washington to set such a policy ensures that the national government will interfere with decisions made by the many private and public institutions appropriately concerned with these issues.

After all, left-wing antifamily groups are much more likely to seize control of the congressional process than legislatures in 50 states, and thousands of school districts, and millions of families. All it takes is one left-wing Democratic committee chairman, or one pliable Republican politico seeking public affirmation from the usual suspects, and every child in America will be placed at risk by a new federal program.

The Bush administration's "faith-based initiative" falls into the same category. At one level, seeking to place religious-oriented charities on the same level as secular ones in terms of their eligibility for government grants seems perfectly reasonable, especially since the evidence is overwhelming that those groups that address spiritual and moral issues are much more likely to succeed in transforming people's lives.

That is not all that the faith-based initiative involves, however. In fact, many groups view it as an opportunity to increase the size of the federal gravy train. Just as AmeriCorps' government-funded "volunteers" have allowed groups like Habitat for Humanity to get their piece of the federal pie, so, too, the faith-based program will turn groups allegedly fighting welfare into welfare recipients.

Indeed, the *Washington Post* reported in mid-September that "Republicans are using the prospect of federal grants from the Bush administration's 'faith-based initiative' to boost support for GOP candidates, especially among black voters in states and districts with tight congressional races this fall." How so? Republican officials have been explaining that "the federal program will distribute about $25 million in grants to community groups affiliated with churches and other private-sector initiatives." Rep. Rob Simmons (R-CT) opined that the initiative is not "a system that replaces government. It's designed to be a system that embraces government."

In short, politicians in Washington, at least, think that today's Christian conservatives can be bought for a few pieces of silver,

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a purchase that threatens the soul of groups by compromising their religious mission for the sake of winning the cash *and* transfers decision-making power to the national level in the process. It would be far better to fight to defund Uncle Sam, leaving the money where it belongs—with families, communities, and states—than to work to get a "fair" share of the federal loot.

The religious right's emphasis on Washington also seems curious given the movement's success at the state level. Christian conservatives hold a majority of seats on Republican state committees in 18 states and large minorities in all but six others. That does not guarantee legislative success, of course. Nevertheless, it is far harder to translate fervent activism into actual results at the federal level. Moreover, making government, especially the national government, a moral enforcer encourages abuse by majorities or influential minorities that gain power. As America's traditional Christian consensus crumbles, we are more likely to see government actively attacking the Christian understanding of virtue.

Indeed, government already increasingly promotes alternative moral views. This is evident in schools, where sex education has become relativist indoctrination. Such abuses are possible only if government is given the authority to mold souls in order to promote virtue, or traditional values, or the family, or whatever. Despite the best intentions of advocates of statecraft-as-soulcraft, government is likely to inculcate notions of virtue very different from those intended by the advocates of traditional morality and the family. When that government is the national government, it can impose its dictates on every other institution in society, crushing all before it. Pro-family advocates who seek to enlist Uncle Sam in their cause are risking everything when he turns against them, as he inevitably will.

The fact that Washington can do little to help does not mean that there is nothing it should do. Religious conservatives should press federal officials to adopt "First, do no harm" as their maxim. For instance, though the community-wide moral breakdown most evident in the inner city has many causes, government policy has exacerbated the problem at almost every level.

Governments punish both marriage and thrift through their welfare and tax policies. Welfare disrupts families and communities, subsidizes destructive personal habits, and discourages personal responsibility. The state has spent years attempting to expunge not only religious practices but religious values from the public square, and the public-school monopoly discourages moral education. These same schools fail to equip students for employment in an advanced industrial economy, while other government agencies impose licensing and regulatory restrictions that impede job creation. Drug prohibition has created a profitable illicit market that appeals to people with few alternative economic options. Simply reducing national interference with private choices and local and state policies in these areas would provide better protection for the family than any "pro-family" legislation would.

The left has long desired to use state power to remake the individual and society. That experiment filled the 20th century with misery and death. Now, many on the right hope to use government in a similar fashion, if for more worthy ends. The outcome may be less horrific, but it will almost certainly fail in its goal of making us into better, more virtuous people and strengthening the family. Religious conservatives, above all, should reject Uncle Sam's 30 pieces of silver.

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Islam: The Score

by Michael M. Stenton

"We are divided in the face of a Mohammedan world, divided in every way—divided by separate independent national rivalries, by the warring interests of possessors and dispossessed—and that division cannot be remedied because the cement which once held our civilization together, the Christian cement, has crumbled."

—Hilaire Belloc

The Sword of the Prophet: The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam—History, Theology, Impact on the World
by Srdja Trifkovic
Boston: Regina Orthodox Press; 332 pp., $19.95

◆

Neither Christians nor Jews can claim that their religion has always been innocuous. What Srdja Trifkovic argues in *The Sword of the Prophet*, however, is that the raw stuff from which Islam is made is particularly dangerous and unpromising, that the bellicose tradition is worse than admitted by the influential Islamic Studies lobby, that the present threat from Islam is alarming, and that the future demands the vigilance of non-Muslims. In doing so, he challenges the opinion that all religions are somehow equally valid (or invalid). All theocracy, equipped with a scriptural license for violence, is dangerous, and Islam is—and has been, almost continuously—more theocratic than rival religions. The men and women born into this religion may deserve our sympathy, but they are not aided by a blanket respect for Islam. The assumption that there is no such thing as false religion is not a concession that Muslims would make.

Trifkovic will be accused of missing the essential point, which is that Muslim

H. Ward Sterett

majorities do not want what the violent minorities want, that peaceful integration has a track record and a future, and that our immediate requirement is to divest ourselves of Christian prejudice. This is, at best, evasive. Christian prejudice is little more than a trace element among Westerners. The record of peaceful coexistence is too short, and it is outweighed by the record of human catastrophe where Islam and other religions have come together. Moreover, it is in the nature of religion that it is the minorities who take it seriously, and it is in the nature of serious people that they can be effective in leading ordinary people. Still, many Westerners will dismiss Trifkovic's account of Islam simply because they refuse to take religion seriously.

Today, religion offers identity in a world whose leading powers have turned against nationality. Preaching, the example of personal sacrifice, and the threat of violence—by Muslims against Muslims—can impose new disciplines. Muslim communities, even when they are quiet, remain vulnerable to well-funded proselytizing that draws on sacred ideals. The myth—and, indeed, the history—of religious expansion and conquest achieved as a militant response to persecution is unalterably fixed in the standard narrative of Islam.

Islam is a religion born in battle and formed by war. Its adherents nourish their faith and their imagination with this story and derive a sense of manifest destiny from it. The faithful have no notion of the damage Islamic conquest did to Christian civilization, which, thanks in part to the impact of Islam, became Latin, not Greek, at the center. The destruction of the Byzantine Empire was a catastrophic loss that deprived many young nations of their patrimony and potential. By contrast, the pro-Islamic account of Islamic expansion—the advance of toleration at the expense of a Christian world that was probably unwilling to resist—is an amusing exercise in Islamo-Whiggery. An explosive mixture of poverty, lust for plunder, and religious excitement drove Islamic expansion—and that combination is by no means extinct. This force tore into the vital organs of three civilizations. Islamic arrangements followed a very secular logic: Islam was legally supreme because the Arab elite needed social advantages and a special solidarity, and it was tolerant because the conquering elite could not have retained power without toleration. Jerusalem was

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worth a Mass. Both the tolerance and the intolerance of the Islamic recipe served the goals of power and expansion.

Perhaps Islamic civilization flourished best when Islam was a minority religion and slaves were cultured, cheap, and diverse. After centuries of vigor, Islamic civilization declined. Many Western commentators argue that the religion poisoned its own civilization, even though this leaves open the question of why it was compatible with high culture and wealth-making at first. There could, theoretically, have been a different kind of Islamic polity than the ones that became moribund, but they all *did* become moribund. The Ottoman Empire grabbed a great deal of territory and power but, subsequently, decayed so deeply that the Christian nations whom it oppressed developed an overpowering urge to rid themselves of Islamic civilization as well as of Ottoman political tutelage.

Islam has played a role in legitimating the imperialism of Islamic states and their resistance to the imperialism of the West. Even where resistance has failed, Islam has still offered shape and identity to anti-imperialism. The cry of *jihad* is common; the real thing, however, is not. Anticolonialism after 1945 gave every appearance of owing more to secular nationalism than to religion, although their uneasy combination was inevitable. The British were perhaps being unduly cautious when they refused to intervene in 1924 to protect Mecca and Medina from Saudi war bands seizing the holy places in the name of Wahabi puritanism. To a secular-minded great power, the newly extended Saudi Arabian kingdom must have seemed an event of local importance. But the Wahabi *ulema*, and the al Saud, had been a danger to the peace and safety of the entire region since 1801, when they sacked the Shiite city of Kerbala and desecrated its shrine. No other Islamic regime has been as menacing and ambitious. However, not until after 1945, when the American oil companies paid for fabulous opportunities with huge royalties and favorable publicity, did the Saudis have good connections and serious financial resources to support them; and not until Presidents Kennedy and Nasser decided that they were, on balance, against each other did America really get behind the Saudis.

The West ended up surrendering to OPEC in 1973—a surrender partly engineered by American diplomacy—and so provided Saudi Arabia with immense sums to invest in Wahabi proselytism and Islamic prestige. America was backing Islam, in its most unattractive variant, because it was convenient when the strategic problem seemed to be communism. The 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran made this support seem even more urgent, and the real *jihad* in Afghanistan led to military and organizational backing by the United States. Washington's patronage of Wahabi fanaticism tells us a great deal not just about Western *raison d'etat* but about the docility of the mainstream press and TV in modern society. Europe paid for OPEC oil with a political discretion—at times a servility—that ultimately meant funding Saudi Arabia's palaces, airports, fountains, conspicuous consumption, and very costly weapons.

It might be argued that the problem of Islamic radicalism does not stem from Islam itself but merely reflects the nature of great powers and the opportunism of fanatics. But Islam has outgrown its origins and cannot be answered if we are too polite or frightened to see ideology in religion. Considering the attack on the Soviet Union, the challenge to the United States, and the continuing attacks on Russia, China, and India, we must conclude that Islamic *jihad* poses a significant threat to the world. Islam is much closer to world dominance than ever before. The Muslim world is experiencing a resurgence of Islamic proselytism, at a time when it is still in a vulnerable and suggestible state: After generations of marginality, Islamic agitation has become the central story in many countries. The work of Islamic charities is very important: The mosques in the West do not build themselves. What has been done in Algeria and Egypt, as well as in America and England, will now be difficult to undo.

Among the world's great powers, there are no Christian states anymore and no instinctively secular states except China. The Western powers are confused about religion and toleration; they are trapped by formulas and traditions they cannot manipulate with the confidence of true belief. But any state with Muslim citizens must assert the right to intervene in religion, to be a filter against theocratic fanaticism and to be the sponsor of moderation. The Chinese may go too far in this respect, but they do understand the terrific price of religious warfare, and they are rightly vigilant.

The problem of Islam in the West raises questions that we mostly contrive to leave undecided: whether, for example, our public and educational values are strictly secular; what to think and do about blasphemy; whether the pulpit can be censored; and what is the legitimate power of foreign money. The presence of Islam forces us to resolve these conflicts. We are perfectly capable of harassing Muslims at the level of crude policing while being overly tolerant of religious fanaticism. There is no Western consensus—and there is certainly no wise magistracy—for settling disputes that politicians will flee and governments will refuse to adjudicate.

Western Christians and secularists form two sects subservient to the dominant post-Christian religion. Intermittent belief in an enigmatic deity is an optional part of this faith, which includes some obligatory respect for selected aspects of Christianity, expressed by upbeat assessments of democracy, truth, beauty, openness, and the hatred of cruelty. This post-Christianity's antitraditional origins, its unfinished status, its intuitions, and its evangelical hunger for new problems make it, in principle, a radical religion. It

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has even penetrated Christian denominations with its infectious humanism. And its proselytizers would not readily concede that they could fail with "ordinary Muslims," given half a chance. The liberal, post-Christian cry has already gone up: Islamophobia is the new McCarthyism. The last thing that the modern-minded latitudinarian wishes to do is to pick a fight with that which he believes should be tamed and embraced.

Post-Christianity and Islam share roughly the same theological view of Christ. The attraction of Islam for ideological post-Christians is that its existence implies, more strongly than any argument, that traditional Christianity is unnecessary even if you wish to be monotheistic, pious, and mindful of a judgment day. The very existence of a plausible religious rival to the universality of the Church supplies a subversive argument of enduring force, which, though very old, is still being absorbed into the bloodstream of the West as Western parochialism and particularism are dismantled.

The post-Christian faith cherishes the notion of a friendly symbiosis with Islamic communities. But this desire for accommodation, and the difficulties that go with it, will lead to moral confusion absent an educated awareness of Islam's bag of tricks. In particular, it should be clearly understood that Islam does not have the same distinction between religion and society as does the West (if, indeed, it has one at all), so the offer to tolerate Islam will be understood by some Muslims as going beyond what Westerners conventionally regard as "tolerating" religion. While it is still not controversial to say so, we must insist that *sharia* cannot be available in Western societies as a body of law applicable to Muslim citizens, let alone non-Muslims.

The most striking claim in *The Sword of the Prophet* is that the American elite's extreme version of post-Christian religion is bent more aggressively against historic Christianity than any other religion in the West and could even enter into a partnership with Islam. A cultural process of this sort may already be at work. To laugh at the idea is to forget our recent history: a U.S.-directed *jihad* in Afghanistan; the covert U.S. alliance with Islamic revolutionaries in Bosnia; and U.S. support for the Taliban until 1998. The motives for these interventions have been ostensibly secular, but there was something excessive and intense behind them. Even if the motives of Islamic revolutionaries are not exclusively religious, can we say that the moral instinct of Washington globalists is exclusively secular? It is legitimate to wonder whether some premonition of a new religiosity affected the don't-confuse-me-with-the-facts rectitude of the crusaders who dragged NATO to war in Kosovo.

One final point: Those Muslims who are outraged that the violent West should accuse the Islamic Other of intrinsic violence have a point. The Islamic world has reason to be worried by the West's post-Cold War lurch toward high-tech crusades. Once a *fatwa*-opinion is issued in Washington, the media effervesce with moral fervor and military relish, the satellites and academics adjust their orbits and careers, and the bombs start to fall. This is the modern West riding the high horse of its supremacy. It is precisely because crusading globalism is likely to become more violent and better armed than ever, spurred by the attack on New York, that it is urgent to think defensively about Islam.

Of course, our alternative is to act more modestly in the world. But we are told that this would be immoral, that crime must be punished anytime and anywhere, so that no tyrant may sleep soundly in his bed for fear of the advancing banners of the New World Order, in which smart bombs and smart lawyers ring in the Reign of Justice. The new gospel destroys the old law: Let the nations tremble before the New Truth and its missiles! Global fundamentalism, lightly salted with American self-interest, is capable of being both sinister and religious.

Some may say, "But this is not Christianity!" It is more true to say so than it is to say, in the parallel case, "But this is not Islam!" But we are dealing not with Christianity but with what Christian civilization has become. The pacesetters in the West have expressed their post-Christian religion by casting off wisdom and any sense of geographic limits in their renewed willingness to make the world a better place at gunpoint. Islamic revolutionaries have done the same. The refusal to be prudent in dealing with a dangerous religion has condemned Western soldiers to wage strange wars far from their homelands and has all but forced us to tolerate global ambitions, whether we want them or not.

This is the modern *jihad*, the Western *jihad*, which has formed and swollen since 1989, and it has its own growing corps of political janissaries, military-industrial *ghazis*, and fundamentalist jurisconsults. If President Bush cannot achieve the goals he has set, the gaudy globalists will reappear—during his presidency or afterward—as the men and women with solutions. The recommendation of Srdja Trifkovic's book—a severe view of Islamic militancy and of Islam's political agenda—does not give Westerners any license to subscribe to the myth of their own perpetual innocence. <c>

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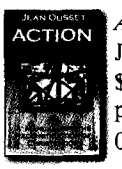

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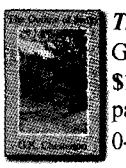

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The Dreary Icon

by Paul Gottfried

John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity
by Linda C. Raeder
Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press; 402 pp., $49.95

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Linda Raeder's study of John Stuart Mill as a critic of religion and, more specifically, of Christian beliefs and morals is heavily researched and densely composed. Although carefully and gracefully framed, it is too conceptually demanding to please dull-witted movement conservatives or politically correct academics. Those who disregard this study, however, are missing a devastating assault on an influential thinker whose time is not yet fully gone. Raeder gives no quarter in going after her stodgy Victorian subject, revered by libertarians (most famously, Friedrich Hayek) as well as by others for his alleged promotion of intellectual freedom. Raeder shows that this praise is mostly undeserved and trains her sights on Mill's disdainful view of a deadening past, his fevered hope for a new religion of humanity, and his plans for social reconstruction. She correctly infers that, by looking at Mill's evolutionary notion of traditional religion (largely borrowed from his contemporary, French sociologist Auguste Comte), you can catch the drift of Mill's speculations about the purpose and limits of liberty.

Raeder's investigation builds on earlier attempts to penetrate beneath the dreary icon Mill has become, especially among democratic ideologues, and to reveal his persistent unattractive side. Such unmasking can be seen in the painfully subtle strictures of German refugee scholar (and longtime Yale fixture) Joseph Hamburger in *John Stuart Mill on Liberty and Control* (1999), in Maurice Cowling's nonstop invective *Mill and Liberalism* (1963), and in my own recurrent attack, launched in *After Liberalism*, on Mill as the precursor of managerial democracy. But Raeder widens and deepens this cumulative attack: She puts at the center of her far-reaching interpretation Mill's posthumously published *Three Essays on Religion* (1874). In these essays, written with the collaboration of his feminist wife, Harriet Taylor, over a 20-year period, it is possible to grasp Mill's revulsion for traditional religion and his determination to prepare the coming generation for life under scientifically managed democracy.

Raeder rejects the idea, put forth in Mill's *Autobiography*, that he was reared without any strong religious beliefs. She notes that he took away from his childhood the utilitarian conviction of his father, James Mill, and of the bosom friend of James, Jeremy Bentham, that religion represents the erroneous search to explain natural phenomena in prescientific societies. John Stuart found the same view usefully formulated in Comte's sociological picture of the development of human consciousness, together with Comte's elevation of social science to the highest form of practical learning. Not surprisingly, the younger Mill published a celebratory biography of Comte in 1865, chiefly to familiarize English readers with his "positivism." For those who have read Mill's *On Liberty*, it should be clear that the "positivist" grid asserts its presence at the beginning of this tract, widely believed to be about the free exchange of ideas. Liberty is given an instrumental value, in terms of the overall social goal that Raeder identifies in her introduction as the "Millian project":

> Mill was committed both to the destruction of what he regarded as a moribund and immoral Christianity and to the social establishment of what he regarded as the superior morality and spirituality embodied in the Religion of Humanity that he adopted, with revisions, from Auguste Comte.

Raeder observes that what made Mill an appropriate founder of what is sometimes called "secular humanism" was his fixation on religion (a trait he shared with Comte), without a belief, however, in transcendent or divine truths. From his *Autobiography* to the second of his *Religious Essays*, "On the Utility of Religion," Mill floods his reader with vague impressions of religiosity, even describing Christianity as a "precious gift" and Jesus as a "sublime man." Raeder is right to perceive in these seemingly pious gestures either vacuous sentimentality or a ploy to trick the unsuspecting into acceptance of a scientifically grounded "Religion of Humanity." While Mill, like his lapsed Catholic friend Comte, relished some aspects of received religious tradition—in particular, as both men observe, their power to elicit obedience—each intended to strip away its metaphysical essence and to infuse it with a positivist substance. Indeed, Mill, as Raeder emphasizes, found not only revealed truths but nonempirical sources of knowledge to be a hindrance to human progress. In the scientific, egalitarian, and feminist future he looked forward to creating, everyone would be trained to make the proper and necessary associations among ideas communicated by the senses and subject to verification. There would be no room for intuitionists or for those appealing to communal custom or to what had been firmly accepted religious authority.

An idea that hovers over this study and is explicitly stated at the end is that "Mill was, above all, a religious thinker." The secular humanism that his work nourished reflected his own "animus toward Christianity and, more generally toward the notion of a transcendent source of order and obligation," combined with the retention of at least some religious sentiment. Christian culture had left its mark on Mill, but, as a letter he wrote to Thomas Carlyle in 1833 (quoted by Raeder) makes evident, he was not quite sure what he wished to retain of it once it was "gone, never to return, only what was best in it to reappear in another and still higher form, sometime [only Heaven knows when]."

Moreover, what there is in Mill of religion has a mawkish, pietistic flavor. Unlike the virile Catholic authoritarianism encountered on the Continent and identified even with such freethinkers as Comte and Charles Maurras, a Victorian *girliness* suffuses Mill's puerile religious impressions and his comments on Jesus the moralist. And this vestigial and palpably unmasculine religiosity fits in with Mill's work, cowritten with Harriet, lamenting the supposed enslavement of the fair sex in 19th-century England. This, too, may be the kind of link that Raeder is looking for between Mill, the secular humanist prophet, and the present age. Our feminized politics, no less than our Religion of Humanity (renamed "human rights"), would have delighted Raeder's subject. One among other merits of her learned study is that she reveals an unmistakable distaste for both her subject and the world he helped to fashion. For this *bienséance* and for her exhaustive, focused research, Raeder

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deserves our respect.

Paul Gottfried is a professor of humanities at Elizabethtown College in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, and the author, most recently, of Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt *(University of Missouri Press).*

The Roots of Indulgence

by Karina Rollins

The Marriage Problem: How Our Culture Has Weakened Families
by James Q. Wilson
New York: HarperCollins;
274 pp., $25.95

James Q. Wilson, the esteemed social scientist, should be loved by liberals: He is deeply concerned with root causes. While the title of his latest work, *The Marriage Problem: How Our Culture Has Weakened Families*, suggests otherwise, the book is not just another screed about how the 60's destroyed the family. In fact, Wilson says, the 60's in this respect were but the culmination of centuries of developments.

The tragic state of the black family in America (more than half of American black children are reared by an unmarried mother) and the frightening speed at which white families are catching up (one in five white children lives without a father) are well documented. Wilson lists every social pathology believed to result from single-parent families: higher school drop-out rates, greater risk of drug abuse, teen sex, illegitimate children, increased delinquency. Few people still deny the effects family life has on a child's well-being, but seemingly even fewer can agree on the cause of this social disaster, which, as Wilson notes, has resulted in "two nations" living in one country.

Those interested in historical background and explanations will find this book compelling. Wilson digs deep, going back as far as the Magna Carta, and readers will learn more than perhaps they ever wished to know about old English marriage customs and the role of the hoe in the family life of various African clans. And he is at pains to address any and every issue that relates to the state of marriage and family.

At times, however, Wilson goes overboard, expounding on large and obscure studies alike, as well as minutiae about such subjects as low birth weight and infant mortality or male preferences in female beauty. ("Men also like slender waists; to be exact, a waist-hip ratio of roughly 0.7.") Wilson explains that men prefer young, attractive women because youth and health are indicators of fertility and that women prefer men with ample income because the amount of money a man earns indicates his ability to provide for a wife and children. But these are indicators for the basis of *attraction* between the sexes, which, given the devastating prevalence of teen mothers, absent fathers of multiple children, venereal disease, one-night stands, abortion, and abandoned women, is clearly one factor that is *not* in decline.

And Wilson can be excruciatingly repetitive. This within a single paragraph:

> men, who value sex, wish to be certain of the paternity of their children. . . . the man wants to be certain that a child born to a woman he has impregnated is really his. . . . men wish to be certain of their paternity . . .

Reading Wilson's book is often like sitting through a Philip Glass concert.

Wilson finally settles on what he considers the two main roots of the family's historical decline: slavery and the Enlightenment. Under slavery, marriage was forbidden, and family members were a master's property and could be sold at any time, from which black women learned not to rely on the presence of a man. Even when long-lasting monogamous unions were formed, a black man could neither provide for nor protect his family. Long after slavery ended, discrimination prevented most blacks from owning land or holding decent jobs, thereby continuing to rob black men of the power to be true heads of their families. The Enlightenment, Wilson argues, placed individual rights above the interests of the community and came to enshrine the notion of a right to personal happiness and fulfillment, which gradually led to the lax attitude toward divorce and unwed motherhood that reigns today.

But Wilson qualifies both the effects of slavery and his indictment of the Enlightenment. He notes that slavery ended one-and-a-half centuries ago. And while the case can be made that blacks still face discrimination to a degree, Wilson points out that much of it has been overcome and that Mexican immigrants, who confront prejudice as well and generally have lower incomes, have a far higher marriage rate and a better record on family unity than do blacks. These facts will not please those who seek to blame American society for the plight of much of the black population.

And, despite all the damage done to families, and for all his reproaches to selfish individualism, Wilson places himself firmly in the modernist camp. "Would you ignore the Enlightenment, with all that it has meant in terms of economic growth, political freedom, scientific invention, and artistic imagination?" he asks. Wilson will disappoint antidivorce purists, for, while he lays the blame for the decay of marriage at the feet of no-fault divorce laws, he also believes that, "Obviously, some married couples should get a divorce, even if a child feels hurt." His ideal is "to find, somehow, the optimum number of divorces."

Since ending slavery has not saved the black family, and repealing the Enlightenment to save the white family is not an option, just what does Wilson propose? He runs through the litany of various public programs and how they have had little or no effect on the family problem. Society has changed so dramatically, so entrenched is the open acceptance of casual cohabitation and out-of-wedlock childbearing, of the idea that government money is a right. Is there any way back from the abyss? Can a culture of responsibility ever be restored?

Wilson believes that it can, since, he claims, it has happened once before. Queen Victoria ascended the throne at a time when both England and America "were experiencing a profound social erosion." In the early 1840's, "there was a sharp increase in crime and illegitimacy." Yet, "despite rapid industrialization, massive urbanization, the emergence of a factory-based working class, and (in America) high rates of immigration . . . both America and England became safer." "In England, the illegitimacy ratio fell sharply between 1860 and 1900." Why? "The answer, it seems, is that bourgeois morality gained an extraordinary ascendancy owing mostly to private efforts." How?

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> The Young Men's Christian Association, Sunday schools, religious revivals, church membership, and temperance movements became the order of the day. Their goal was character and their reach was extraordinary.

The Victorian era was not, Wilson makes clear,

> as we sometimes think today, merely a stuffy and hypocritical effort to adopt the façade of dubious middle-class life, but in fact a massive private effort to inculcate self-control in people who were confronting the vast temptations of big-city life.

Other cultural forces, propelled by the upheaval of two world wars, undid the Victorian achievements. That doesn't, however, mean that today's values must remain permanent fixtures of Western life. What we need today, Wilson argues, "is a powerful cultural reassertion of the value of marriage." He wisely cautions that "restoring that value is not something that can be done by public policy." How to do it, Wilson admits, is not at all clear. But he does know that the goal can only be reached "by families and churches and neighborhoods and the media, not by tax breaks or government subsidies."

Wilson ends with one bit of tangible advice: "Our task is to teach our children . . . by insisting on a simple rule: Do not have children before you are married." The Victorians "thought that people had a fallible human nature that would often lead them to choose self-indulgence over self-restraint." We have been suffering the consequences of living in a time of self-indulgence and of forgetting what to teach our precious, fallible children.

Karina Rollins is senior editor at the American Enterprise.

The Life You Save

by J.O. Tate

Flannery O'Connor: A Life
by Jean W. Cash
Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press; 356 pp., $30.00

◆

There have been dozens of books and hundreds of articles written about Flannery O'Connor (1925-64) in America alone, and considerable attention from overseas as well. Indeed, R. Neil Scott's new *Flannery O'Connor: An Annotated Reference Guide to Criticism* describes 3,297 books, articles, dissertations, and master's theses by 2,474 different authors. Though she died at age 39, O'Connor (perhaps like Poe and Chopin) made an extraordinary impact that is still felt. Her posthumous publications (stories, essays, reviews, letters, addresses) and the film renderings of her works have greatly extended her presence, while the publication of her collected works in a volume of the Library of America in 1988 perhaps fixed her reputation. She was the second woman so honored (Edith Wharton was the first), and the first born in the 20th century. Riffing through all the pages of that library, we may well conclude that, word for word, the O'Connor volume is the single most distinguished in the entire series. Toughski luckski, Edith. *Tant pis,* Henry James.

Owing to the explosive nature of her fiction, much of the attention that O'Connor has received has been either perplexed or indignant. Sensitively attuned to the *Zeitgeist*, O'Connor set herself against it insofar as it contradicted the theological depth she knew from her Catholic faith. That faith, as she emphasized, was not merely a given but was always under construction. One of the merits of Jean Cash's biography is to show how open O'Connor was to experience and to people.

The very notion of a biography of O'Connor, however, is striking for several reasons. Hers was a life in which, ostensibly at least, there was a lot that didn't happen. The lupus that she developed early on, and the drugs she took for it, kept her at home. Since marriage was out of the question, she formed a domestic partnership with her mother and was devoted not so much to her work as to the cultivation of her vision. And this leads to another reason why a biography should be remarkable.

The Habit of Being, the edition of O'Connor's letters as edited by Sally Fitzgerald and published in 1979 preempted a biography to a large degree. In themselves, the letters amounted to an epistolary autobiography, and some have even thought that volume to be O'Connor's greatest work. And there is yet another "lion in the path," as Henry James put it: For years, Sally Fitzgerald assembled information toward an authorized biography, but that project was incomplete at her death in 2000, and its future is unclear. Jean Cash, who thus worked as an unauthorized biographer, has done much in terms of scholarship and interviews to flesh out her portrait of Flannery O'Connor.

To her credit, she has gotten right some essential points that needed to be clarified. One is that Flannery O'Con-

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nor, even as a child, was set apart by her distinctiveness and her capacity for wonder, and her superior intelligence was always obvious to her teachers and her peers. Another is that, though we always picture O'Connor at home in Milledgeville, Georgia, she would not have lived there had it not been for the disease that finally killed her. Full disclosure requires that I acknowledge Cash's quotations of my parents and myself; full disclosure also requires me to add, however, that I have still not seen a completely satisfactory account of O'Connor's highly restrictive relationship with her immediate environment.

Jean Cash has treated O'Connor's and her mother's attitudes toward blacks in a way that seems to me both anachronistic and unnecessary—though she has not had much to say about O'Connor's attitudes toward lower-class whites, present in so large a part of her work. Cash has felt herself obliged to respond to the feminist critique of O'Connor and to deny that O'Connor was a lesbian, which also seems unnecessary. And she has not only opened the door to speculation about what O'Connor would have become had she lived longer but supplied the answer in the form of a quotation from a feminist critic: "If Flannery O'Connor had lived long enough for the feminist movement to arouse her awareness of society's injustices to women and of her own repressed rage, surely she would have confronted these problems consciously in her stories." Though this hypothesis seems unaligned with anything we know about O'Connor from within or without Cash's biography, such thoughts suggest others. I am convinced that, if Flannery O'Connor had lived long enough to become more aware of exercise, nutrition, and Oriental philosophy, she would surely have discarded her cumbersome crutches, worked out in a modish jogging outfit, eaten tofu, and meditated in the lotus position.

However that may be, Jean Cash's biography reminds us of O'Connor's clarity of mind, that sense of perspective with which she overwhelms her readers. The sense of elevation or revelation, seeping through homely material and crafted as a vision that is beyond time, retains its authority. Flannery O'Connor's works, in their ironic balance, are still imposing and, ultimately, comic, no matter how painful they are to her protagonists. The biographer has demonstrated the possibility that the artist, in her person and in her effect on others, was greater even than the works into which she inscribed so much of herself.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

Los Diablos Tejanos

by Wayne M. Sarf

Lone Star Justice: The First Century of the Texas Rangers
by Robert M. Utley
New York: Oxford University Press; 416 pp., $30.00

A Texas Ranger, it was famously claimed, "can ride like a Mexican, trail like an Indian, shoot like a Tennessean, and fight like a very devil." These days, such a bland presumption of ethnic attributes would merit a visit from the Sensitivity Police, and even respect for martial skills verges on political incorrectness, since progressive Americans must tolerate such skills, if at all, only among those deemed military or police "professionals." The early Ranger, as Robert M. Utley reveals, fits into neither category of specialist.

Utley, the premier historian of our military frontier, somehow neglects to quote the famous description of Ranger prowess. But he has no truck with p.c. and refreshingly meets "challenges of nomenclature" by noting that blacks "will be called blacks, not African Americans," while logically terming "Mexicans" all those, north or south of the border, called such by white Texans. His apologetic, convenient use of the term "Anglo" for such whites, regardless of ethnicity, is less historical, and, as he admits, the very title *Lone Star Justice* misleads; until 1874, Texas Rangers were citizen soldiers—sporadically mobilized, given such formal titles as "mounted riflemen," and defining "a tradition rather than an institution." Only after the Civil War did crime-fighting eclipse Indian-fighting, producing a legend of frontier civilizers and evenhanded lawmen. Utley gamely explores the truth behind myth and countermyth, challenging the revisionist image depicting ruthless Indian-killers and *gringo* terrorizers of innocent Mexicans.

Comanche Indian raids against American colonists in Texas spurred the creation of a force to patrol or "range" the frontier, and the first rangers were apparently ten men enlisted in 1823. In 1835, before Texas's war of independence, the provisional government established the legend's "formal beginnings" by authorizing a Corps of Rangers whose members, in best militia fashion, furnished their own horses, arms, and clothing. Such was the magic of the name "Ranger" that subsequent volunteer bands bore it even when their government had not bothered to authorize the title—and a Confederate cavalry regiment borrowed it in riding to war as "Terry's Texas Rangers," even while volunteers in state service remained to protect the frontier.

The Comanches, like the slaveholding, bellicose "Texians" they fought for decades, did not feel other people's pain so much as enjoy it, with war, their great obsession, "indiscriminately falling on everyone, from infants to old people of both sexes, by rape, pillage, torture, brutal treatment of captives, and frightful butchery of the dead." At an 1840 council, they nonchalantly returned a captive whose nose had been burned off by periodic (and, to her captors, amusing) applications of fire as she slept. The enraged Texans, hoping to seize the assembled chiefs as hostages and free other captives, ended by slaughtering them; volunteers raised to meet the inevitable revenge raids were called "Rangers," whatever their official designation.

Skilled riders and plainsmen, lacking flags or uniforms, the Rangers faced a mounted foe able to loose a hail of arrows for every shot from a Ranger's muzzle-loading rifle. But the Rangers discovered a newfangled weapon ideal for mounted fighting, and, in 1844, 14 men under Capt. John Coffey "Jack" Hays used five-shooting Colt revolvers in a gory rout of an estimated 70 Comanches. Extracting the best from such fiercely independent volunteers required such leaders as Hays, for, as Utley notes, "Texas fighting men could be led but not commanded." Their military shortcomings were perhaps the vices that accompanied frontier virtues, which included a breathless self-confidence and deadly marksmanship. Before one 1842 clash against Mexican regulars, a Ranger minister's inspirational remarks concluded, prophetically, "Let us shoot low, and my impression before God is, that we shall win this fight." But at the Dawson massacre, dramatizing the

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citizen soldier's "proclivity for self-destruction," rangers clamored for battle over their leader's better judgment, only to be slaughtered. Even here, individual Texans proved themselves, if not quite soldiers, then magnificent fighters. A "Hurculean" (*sic*) slave traveling with the Rangers to free his master from Mexican captivity, his last weapon a mesquite limb, inspired his slayers' admiration by rejecting offers of quarter, while a wounded Ranger, charged by a lancer after trying to surrender, disarmed him, ran him through, and escaped on the lancer's horse.

The Mexican War gave the Rangers, now state volunteers in an American army, national fame and reinforced their fighting reputation. "Boys," shouted a mortally wounded Ranger at Monterrey, "place me behind that ledge of rock and give me my revolver, I will do some executing on them yet before I die." General Zachary Taylor lamented their "licentious" indiscipline, but, short of cavalry, tolerated his two Ranger regiments despite their "shameful atrocities." Festooned with weapons and cherishing grudges from massacres at Goliad and the Alamo, Rangers delighted journalists with their outlandish dress and appalled Army officers with their excesses, such as avenging a Mexican butchery of American teamsters by slaughtering the men of a small village. One Army regular declared, "The Mexicans dread the Texians more than they do the devil, and they have good reason for it." But even *Los Diablos Tejanos* yielded to a plea that they not dishonor Texas by murdering the infamous Santa Anna at war's end.

Indian warfare highlighted the shortcomings of regular troops. "Give us Rangers in Texas," urged Sam Houston, arguing that one regiment, federally subsidized, could allow U.S. forces to withdraw. Even when the source of financing was uncertain, however, governors repeatedly summoned Rangers into temporary service. Capt. John Salmon "Rip" Ford paid tribute to an already solid tradition after a stunning 1858 victory over the Comanches, proclaiming his men's right "to be recognized as Texas Rangers of the old stamp." With Indian warfare persisting after the Civil War, Texas sold "Frontier Defense Bonds" and revived the Rangers in 1870.

This permanent "Frontier Battalion" was both a disciplined military force and a professional state law-enforcement arm, though it was a separate organization, "McNelly's Rangers"—formally Company A, Volunteer Militia of Washington County—that would fight most ferociously against crime. Capt. Leander McNelly's methods for suppressing banditry included "half-hanging" to extract intelligence and dumping the corpses of 15 slain *bandidos* in Brownsville's public square. He apparently defined "bandits" somewhat loosely, however, and, in their famous invasion of Mexico, Rangers shot down a number of supposed rustlers before learning that they had struck the wrong ranch. (Small wonder producers of a recent film on McNelly's men gutted their initial script, erasing Mexican villains and anachronistically inserting a black Ranger.)

Other Ranger lawmen quickly made their reputation, extraditing *pistolero* John Wesley Hardin from Florida ("Texas, by God!" cried Hardin, seeing the drawn Colt shortly slammed up against his skull), and killing train robber Sam Bass. Lesser achievements included, at least on occasion, dubiously claiming that shooting victims had "attempted to escape" or securing a "Ranger conviction" by shooting to death a wounded suspect.

Utley's portrait is inevitably less flattering than Walter Prescott Webb's 1935 classic *The Texas Rangers*, with its tacit acceptance of its heroes' methods and racial attitudes. Both authors record the stirring motto of Capt. William B. McDonald, ultimately carved on his tombstone: "No man in the wrong can stand up a fellow that's in the right and keeps on a-comin'." But unlike Webb, who, without comment, quotes his hero addressing black soldiers (accused in 1906 of murdering Brownsville citizens) as "niggers," Utley regards McDonald's role in the infamous "Brownsville affair" as bigoted and self-righteous. Yet he is also skeptical of the sweeping revisionist portrait of Rangers as cowards and gun-planting murderers—even noting that Mexicans sometimes blamed other lawmen's sins on the too-fabled "*rinches*."

Utley, who is completing a second volume, expertly sorts out the Rangers' administrative and legislative history up to 1910. But he readily acknowledges that he omits many episodes familiar to aficionados, and these colorful tales leave me wishing for more. Obvious crimes and atrocities aside, Utley's honest portrayal of old-fashioned attitudes may disturb readers quick to impose modern values on the past—though, given the chance, old Rangers would surely puzzle over modern notions of having soldiers "fight" terrorism by patrolling airports with unloaded rifles. Perhaps, as Barbara Tuchman did in contemplating England's fierce Black Prince, we should ask why such men became heroes in their own time before asking why we still find them compelling, as Larry McMurtry fans can testify. Is it because our cherished values of toleration require bolstering by older virtues, prized by Comanche and Ranger alike? In a new century, when ordinary citizens have become both targets and impromptu warriors, we might well heed C.L. Sonnichsen, whose classic study of Texas feuds found, amidst their horrors, grim comfort in the feudists' courage. Sonnichsen did not glamorize the violent past: "But there is one thing we can all be certain of—as long as this country lasts, there will be times when we need a man who will die before he will run."

Dr. Wayne M. Sarf is coeditor of the quarterly Custer/Little Bighorn Battlefield Advocate *and the author of* The Little Bighorn Campaign, March-September 1876 *and* God Bless You, Buffalo Bill: A Layman's Guide to History and the Western Film.

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—*from an essay by the Rev. Gerald Zandstra in the* Acton Commentary

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by Samuel Francis

Prophesying War

As the summer before the first anniversary of the September 11 attack drew to a sweltering end, the Bush administration desperately sought some plausible reason for the war against Iraq that its chieftains so desperately wanted to wage. The appeal to the "weapons of mass destruction" that Saddam Hussein supposedly harbors and which he was alleged to have deployed "against his own people" (meaning the Kurds, who live within Iraq but distinctly do not consider themselves to be Hussein's "people") was the main, but by no means the only, plausible reason offered. In the months since Saddam Hussein once again became a target of American military power, every conceivable villainy was attributed to him. *Insight*, the weekly newsmagazine of the militantly pro-war *Washington Times*, and later a vast op-ed on the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page even revived "John Doe II," the mysterious and elusive accomplice of the late Timothy McVeigh in the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995. The FBI has long since concluded that John Doe II never existed (mainly, I suspect, because they could never find or identify him, just as they have never managed to find or identify the real anthrax killer of last autumn), and the public has long since lost interest in Mr. Doe. But *Insight* managed to produce a source who claimed that John Doe II not only exists but was an Iraqi agent, though exactly why Saddam Hussein would have wanted to blow up a building in Oklahoma remained obscure.

Then there was the mysterious meeting between the supposed mastermind of the September 11 attacks (the also-late Muhammad Atta) and officials in the Iraqi embassy in Prague not long before the attack. That claim, apparently first advanced by *New York Times* columnist William Safire, was bounced around the media for months before *Newsweek*, last May, more or less effectively showed that it was not true. But, lo and behold, if it did not resurrect itself in the neoconservative *Weekly Standard*, of all places. The *Standard* is not exactly a cool voice of objectivity on Middle Eastern questions (neither is Mr. Safire), and especially on the war against Iraq, so the claim of the magazine's executive editor Fred Barnes that Atta really did meet with the Iraqis in Prague, according to what the Czech ambassador to the United States had told him, should be met with some skepticism. Yet Mr. Barnes did not hesitate to draw out the import of the meeting, if it did take place, which is that

> A connection between Iraq and Atta, an al Qaeda operative under Osama bin Laden, bolsters the case for military action by the United States to remove the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq.

That conclusion, of course, is a *non sequitur*, especially since Mr. Barnes acknowledged that "Whether Atta and al-Ani [the consul at the Iraqi embassy in Prague with whom Atta was supposed to have met] discussed plans for September 11 is unknown." If we don't know what they talked about (if they did meet), how can their meeting possibly constitute a "connection" between Iraq and the September 11 attack? Moreover, Mr. Barnes identifies Ahmed al-Ani only as an Iraqi consul. He never alleges that the consul played any intelligence or covert-action role. For all Mr. Barnes or anyone else knows, the consul and Mr. Atta may have talked about stamp-collecting or even the possibility of Mr. Atta's traveling to Iraq. There is no evidence whatsoever that the meeting, if it even occurred, had any sinister purpose.

It would not be surprising to read in the conservative and neoconservative press that Saddam Hussein was behind the Kennedy assassination and is harboring Nazi war criminals, but what the case for war against him really mirrored was the case for the FBI/BATF attack on the Branch Davidian compound at Waco in 1993. Just as David Koresh was alleged to be storing illegal weapons, so Saddam is alleged to harbor "weapons of mass destruction." Just as Koresh was accused of molesting children, so Saddam's regime is accused of tortures and brutalities previously known only among those communist tyrannies with which the United States and the West were once pleased to conduct trade. Just as Koresh refused to allow police, federal law enforcement, or any other government agents to examine his premises, so Saddam refuses to permit the searches of his own country that the United States and the United Nations insist on conducting (until last summer, that is, when Baghdad announced its willingness to permit a search—an offer greeted with sneers from Washington). And just as you may not unreasonably suspect that the Clinton-Reno Justice Department really wanted to launch a violent and lethal attack on the Waco compound, so you may even less unreasonably believe that the administration is determined to wage war against Iraq, regardless of what the Iraqi government has done or plans to do.

The more or less "official" reasons usually trotted out by the administration and its apologists for waging war don't hold water (which is why there are so many phony reasons bobbing to the surface of supposedly serious public discussion). The "weapons of mass destruction" argument is a case in point. Many countries with governments even more unpleasant than Saddam's have similar weapons, and the technology for producing such arsenals is now widely available. Anyone with the skills, money, and will to do so can get himself a few "weapons of mass destruction." The thing for the United States and other powerful states to do about this is not to wage war against every state that looks like it might have or eventually get such weaponry but to make it entirely clear that, if such weapons are ever used against the United States or American targets abroad, the result will be the immediate incineration of the country using them. There are few governments led by despots so stupid or so crazy that they could not understand such a warning, and Saddam Hussein—

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as his behavior over the last several years shows—is not of their number.

Whatever Saddam might have done to the Kurds, he has done absolutely nothing to the United States (nor, for that matter, to Israel—unlike Israel herself, which, in 1981, launched an unprovoked air attack against Iraq's nuclear reactors at Osirak). Before the Gulf War, it was generally understood in American political culture that unprovoked attacks of the kind we launched on Iraq in 1991 and are contemplating launching today were forbidden by the rules of civilized nations and civilized warfare. Not only did the Gulf War itself jettison that principle, but subsequent U.S. military actions in Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans rendered it obsolete. Today, President Bush has pronounced, and the neoconservative press has duly gloated over, his doctrine of "preemptive war," a doctrine long ago anticipated by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. You cannot expect such piddling trifles as the fact that Iraq has never, in her entire history, done anything to harm any American, threaten the security of the United States, or even interfere with our operations and interests abroad to constitute serious barriers to blowing the country to powder or overthrowing her government and imposing our own "regime."

As for achieving those goals, a U.S. war against Iraq would certainly lead to a fairly quick and (for us) reasonably bloodless victory. One reason for avoiding a war, however, is that the conflict might well not be confined to the two countries. Clearly, neither any European "ally" (except Britain) nor any Arab state will support a U.S. war against Iraq in the present circumstances. There is, however, a chance that some Arab states might side with Iraq, especially if they see that she is merely the first state in the region to be targeted. In 1991, out of fear that other Arab states would join Iraq, Israel was pressured into not responding militarily to Saddam's rather inept Scud-missile attacks on Tel Aviv. Today, the Sharon government has explicitly vowed to retaliate if attacked. Indeed, one can imagine Mr. Sharon sitting up nights hoping the Iraqis will attack, and his government has openly urged the United States to attack Iraq. If Israel and the United States together launch a war against Iraq, will other Arab states stay out of the war? Even if they do, what will be the future of any friendly relationship between us and the Arabs after further demolishing Iraq?

Then there is the question of establishing a "democracy" in Iraq to replace the current regime. Not only is a real democracy out of the question, but there is every likelihood that Iraq, once the iron fist of the Hussein regime vanishes, will simply break apart. Kurds in the north would want to create their own state out of the Iraqi corpse, inciting Kurds in neighboring Turkey to demand autonomy there and destabilizing that country, too. Shiites in southern Iraq would like either to create their own state or to join with Shiite Iran, no friend to Iraq. Other minorities—ethnic, religious, political—would profit from the country's dismemberment. Even if Iraq remained intact, however, what can "democracy" there possibly mean? Iraqis have no tradition of voting, of political participation, of respecting political dissent or tolerating political opposition, and there is absolutely no reason to believe that any sizable number of Iraqis desire such gimmickry or that it could function effectively there. What "establishing democracy" really means is, first, the military conquest and occupation of Iraq by American troops and, second, the construction of the kind of soft managerial system there that we built in occupied Europe and Japan after World War II. The more realistic global managers, such as Henry Kissinger, argue that "democratization," aside from all the fantastic rhetoric that accompanies it, is really in our interest because "democratized" states will be less likely to attack or threaten us. That is true only if, by "democratization," they mean the establishment of a bureaucracy, an economic elite, and an intelligentsia that are closely wedded to and dependent on their Western analogues. In that sense, "democracy" in such places as Iraq and Afghanistan is possible, but creating it involves a good deal more than military power and handing out civics textbooks along with chocolate bars and condoms.

Will there be war? It is hard to see what considerations of power, domestic or foreign, could prevent it. The main war party, as always in Middle Eastern issues, is the pro-Zionist, neoconservative cabal, headquartered nowadays in the Pentagon under Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle and echoed relentlessly in the "conservative press"—the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, the *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, the *Washington Times*, *Insight*, *etc.* Within the administration, neoconservative Zionists effectively dominate the Defense Department, the staff of Vice President Cheney, and the National Security Council. Only Secretary of State Colin Powell and some allies (probably old cronies) on the Joint Chiefs of Staff have advised caution. Outside of the administration, the pro-war forces enjoy the unqualified and even more bellicose support of such "Christian Right" divines as Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Franklin Graham. If we measure what a Marxist would call the domestic political "correlation of forces," there is no reason to think the administration will not initiate a war against Iraq, probably sometime in the fall of 2002 or the winter of 2003.

There is, of course, every reason why serious conservatives should oppose such a war and the administration that starts it. Not only would the war violate every conservative principle of justice and create far greater dangers for Americans in the near and distant future in the Middle East (not to mention in our own country) than already exist, but it would augment the dominance of the neoconservatives slavering for it. Having locked himself into the policies they are demanding, President Bush could not easily rid himself of them and their destructive and dangerous counsels. Not only would they entrench themselves in a position of cultural dominance from which they could define "conservatism" itself (as the "Christian Right" will discover once it has served neoconservative purposes), but they would enjoy virtually unchecked political power within the federal government itself.

The coming of a transparently aggressive war against Iraq, followed, in all probability, by further American military aggression against other Arab states in the region and coupled with the administration's equally transparent efforts to construct and legitimize the infrastructure of a police state inside America, go far to render the very concept of "conservatism" of any kidney meaningless. Those who still adhere to that label or to what it is supposed to stand for will have to ask themselves what there is in this country that they really want to conserve. ◁

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by Scott P. Richert

The Cohn Zone

I suppose it was appropriate that I first heard the commercial just as we crossed into Winnebago County, returning from a whirlwind weekend trip to Michigan. At first, the words didn't register; it was only when I heard the voice of Kris Cohn—or rather, Kris*tine O'Rourke* Cohn, since it is an election year, after all—in the last few seconds of the commercial that I woke up and realized just what I had been listening to:

> Hello. This is Jim Edgar. As your former secretary of state, I know how the office touches everyone. And we all share in the frustration over the long lines and wait for services. But I think I have a solution. I urge you to get to know Kristine O'Rourke Cohn, candidate for secretary of state. Currently, Kristine O'Rourke Cohn is the county-board chairman in Winnebago County, where she manages 1,800 employees and balances a budget of over $100 million.
>
> People like Kristine. She's thoughtful, energetic, and believes government should work for us, not against us. Kristine O'Rourke Cohn is a proven, professional administrator and will be a breath of fresh, clean air. I know she has the right experience to cut the long lines and restore people's confidence in state government. On November 5, I'm voting for Kristine O'Rourke Cohn for secretary of state. I urge you to do the same.

In the weeks since, I have heard the commercial dozens of times, on local and Chicago radio stations, though not on WNTA, the most politically conservative talk-radio station in Rockford—which seems a bit odd, since Cohn is a Republican. (WNTA talk-show host Chris Bowman and Cohn have bumped heads on many occasions, however, and Cohn is not one who forgives easily.) Every time I hear it, I feel as if I've slipped a little further into the Twilight Zone. Is the Kris Cohn that we know here in Winnebago County really the Kristine O'Rourke Cohn that Jim Edgar (a former Republican governor of Illinois, as well as secretary of state) is endorsing? Some of the claims in the commercial might make you think otherwise.

Much of the script is simply the obvious spin-doctoring that political consultants get paid enormous sums to produce: Does Kris Cohn really manage 1,800 employees? Well, there are approximately 1,800 people employed by Winnebago County; Cohn's actual staff, however, is relatively small. Like most counties in the Midwest, Winnebago County offers a wide variety of social services through semiautonomous county agencies, most of whose employees certainly do not think of themselves as "managed" by the county-board chairman. Does Cohn balance a budget of over $100 million? Well, the county's budget is around $120 million, and it is balanced every year—though, as county-board member Pete MacKay (a former rival of Cohn's for county-board chairman) likes to point out, that's because Illinois law *requires* all counties to have a balanced budget. And Cohn herself, embroiled in local political controversies about county spending, has often reminded critics that the 24-member county board approves the budget—she can only make recommendations. (The county-board chairman only votes in the case of a tie.)

Again, all of that is fairly standard spin-doctoring. But let's take it at face value for a moment. If Cohn really does manage all of the county's employees and single-handedly balances the county's budget, then who is to blame for the massive failure of law enforcement in Winnebago County? For the second year in a row, Winnebago County has the highest crime rate in Illinois. In a state that includes Chicago and the collar counties, that, unfortunately, is pretty impressive. But the news gets even better. While crime rates have dropped all across the state over the past year, three counties have seen their rates rise significantly: Winnebago, up a whopping 29 percent in the first quarter of 2002; and two predominantly rural counties, Ogle (up 25.1 percent) and Boone (up 8.5 percent), which have the misfortune of being located next to Winnebago County.

And now, as of October 1, Sheriff Richard Meyers has closed the county's jail annex, turning 96 prisoners back out on the street. Why? County budget cuts caused by a decrease in revenue, the result of the recession of the past year and a half. The answer, according to Jim Edgar's "proven, professional administrator"? A brand-new, $130-million jail, financed by a one-cent sales-tax increase, which should further depress the local economy.

The new jail, complete with 1,200 beds, sheriff's offices, and courtrooms (but, strangely, no parking near the public entrance), would occupy over nine square blocks of downtown Rockford and sit directly across the street from the Rockford Rescue Mission and St. Mary's Oratory (see "The Bells of St. Mary's," *The Rockford Files*, October). It's an open secret that the county has long desired the property on which St. Mary's stands; now, since the jail would cover the lot in which most of the congregation parks, some parishioners have begun to suspect that Winnebago County hopes to solve the problem of public parking for the jail by making life uncomfortable for St. Mary's. The lot, after all, would be the ideal site for a parking garage. Bishop Thomas Doran, whose devotion to St. Mary's and the Latin Mass Community of Rockford is well known, may have something to say about that, however.

Since the current average daily population of the Winnebago County Jail is about 560, the county's decision to build a 1,200-bed facility has raised eyebrows as well. While Sheriff Meyers argues that the county will fill 1,000 beds per day by 2020, what will happen in the meantime? Are the additional beds a way to help Cohn balance the county's budget, by renting them out to other counties

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and municipalities whose own jails are overflowing? If so, what impact will that have on the crime rate in Winnebago County, when criminals' families and friends come to visit them here?

While the spin-doctoring portions of the radio spot provide food for thought, it's in the more subjective parts of the commercial that Jim Edgar's voice begins to sound like Rod Serling's. "People like Kristine." No, people elect Kristine, and in that, she has benefited from her wise decision, years ago, to switch political parties. Her political positions, however, have not changed: As a Republican, she's no less liberal than she was as a Democrat. But in a Republican county dominated by an increasingly Democratic city, Cohn can easily defeat conservative candidates in Republican primaries and Democrats in the general election. Still, few of those who vote for Cohn and even fewer of those who have had to deal with her politically and professionally, would claim to like her.

Cohn is certainly "energetic" ("thoughtful," on the other hand, is a matter of opinion), but Edgar's claim that she "believes government should work for us, not against us" makes the familiar, spine-tingling music begin to swell. Under Cohn, Winnebago County government has certainly worked for someone; as county engineer Joe VanderWerff declared at a recent public meeting in Roscoe, "My job is not necessarily to promote development; it is to serve the developers." When citizens stand in the way of developers' plans, they evidently become part of "them," rather than part of "us." Just ask Tom and Jan Ditzler, who lost half of their land over two years ago to a road project that still is not complete, despite being well over budget (see "For Keeps! A Christian Defense of Property," *Views*, April 2001). Or H. Ward Sterett, *Chronicles*' art director, whose historic home, the oldest in the village of Roscoe, is threatened by Cohn's renewed interest in extending Perryville Road north to the Wisconsin border. This, despite Cohn's angry declaration that the county would not spend "one more cent" on extending Perryville Road after Roscoe Township successfully blocked the project in January 2001 (see "Not in Your Back Yard," *Letter From Rockford*, May 2001). Asked why she had changed her mind, Cohn frankly admitted that she thought that the developers who own land along the proposed route "deserve an answer." Her campaign committee's financial-disclosure forms reveal that those same developers, who have bankrolled her local political campaigns, are now helping to fund her run for secretary of state.

All of the road-building and development during Cohn's tenure as county-board chairman certainly gives a different spin to Edgar's claim that, as secretary of state, Kristine O'Rourke Cohn "will be a breath of fresh, clean air."

C

Pennyroyal & Brewer's Yeast

Alfred Nicol

I told the infant in my womb
To listen hard to reason.
God forbid the cherry bloom
Or bear fruit out of season.

There's time for everything—not now—
Too soon, too soon you'd stir,
And mix things up I know not how.
Go back to where you were.

On hearing this, the baby squirms
To say we're both agreed.
So as we're settled on the terms
We settle then in deed.

And I'd imagined—self-deceived—
The spirit felt no crime,
And would return, I half believed,
Some more auspicious time.

But that was foolishness and worse.
Time's a gaping rift.
And birth-denial is a curse
No herbalist can lift.

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Letter From Texas

by Wayne Allensworth

Living With the Questions

◆

It was hot out there, the sun glaring down on us in our suits and ties. The air was sort of smoky, the way it usually is down here near the Gulf Coast. A parade of suits and uniforms marched behind the fire truck. The casket was sitting in back, and the sun glared off our sunglasses and the stark metal of the fire engine. It was very green, too. There had been lots of rain down there. The sycamores, elms, and pecan trees were leafing out, and the massive live oaks lining the road provided a welcome canopy to guard us against the sun.

The bagpipes were playing songs I knew and ones I'd heard but couldn't remember the names of. We wiped our foreheads with handkerchiefs and kept walking.

It was Good Friday.

I didn't know I was a pallbearer until my family and I arrived at the Spring Branch Christian Church for the service, parting a sea of firemen and police cars ready for the big send-off. He had been a fireman and paramedic for almost 20 years. He had been my friend.

They had called me earlier that week and told me he was in the hospital and probably wouldn't make it this time. It was a shock, since he hadn't told me he was sick again. I had called him a couple of weeks back, telling him I wanted to come down and let him meet the kids. He seemed happy about that and as talkative as ever. And he never let on that he was so sick.

But that was the way he was. He didn't want anybody worrying or feeling sorry for him.

He had gotten back in touch with me a few months before, and I promised him I'd be around. Now that I think about it, I figure he knew then that he didn't have long. He was straightening up the furniture, tying up loose ends before he left. Funny, back in school I was supposed to be the tough guy, the strong one. But it was him all along.

He used to do things for you and make you think it was your idea, so that you did not notice the kindness. I guess he didn't care about being thanked.

I walked next to Hank, our old buddy who became a preacher. He had married Marc off. Life, which had been mostly a parade of graduations and weddings and births for us, was taking a turn. Hank had buried Marc's dad. Now we were there. Hank's demeanor—talking and smiling—helped remind me that Marc didn't want sadness, or pity, or shrouds, emotional or otherwise. It's tough. I'm glad Hank was there to help.

The sun had shown bright through the stained-glass window, a gentle Jesus reaching from the skies to take us home in a scheme of reds and blues and whites and flesh tones. Bright life from beyond, sweet chariot riding away.

The church was full.

Somebody sang "How Great Thou Art," then Hank marched up to the pulpit and began talking about a conversation he'd had with Marc a long time ago, about how they had lots of questions, but few answers. "Is life worth dying for?" he asked.

He talked about death washing a tide over everything and about how nobody knows all the answers, like why this man died and another didn't. What we have is Jesus and living with the questions. What we have is the knowledge that Jesus came down here to live among us and that He shared our sorrows and worries and troubles. And when He cried out from the Cross, He shared our questions—and taught us to trust His Father when we couldn't answer them.

"There's no faith without doubt," he said. "No hope without anxiety. And no trust without worry. Trust Him."

So we carry the casket, draped in a Lone Star flag, out to the fire truck, and we walk to the station, and we sweat and talk some.

Some of those thick Gulf clouds pass over, and we can feel the dampness and the smoke in the air. Strangers line the street and watch us as we go by, kids grinning and pointing at the fire truck, a pair of boots and a helmet and a coat sitting on the last step behind the red machine. An older man takes his hat off and puts it over his heart. A fireman and a little boy on the roadside salute.

There's a ceremony at the station, and Hank and I stand in the shade of the garage. The men take the flag and fold it and give it to Marc's wife, who hasn't cried. She takes the flag, and we line up to say goodbye.

The clouds pass over again, and a little breeze blows, drying the wet shirt on my back.

Wayne Allensworth has learned that being a Christian doesn't mean knowing all the answers.

Letter From Alaska

by Dexter and Lynette Clark

Dissolving the Political Bands

◆

When Russia sold Alaska to the United States in 1867, most Americans were not convinced that the purchase of such remote real estate was a good idea. It was called "Seward's folly" or "Seward's icebox." (William H. Seward was the secretary of state who negotiated the deal.) Until then, America had only acquired contiguous territory, which was expected quickly to gain statehood. Alaska was our first foray into colonialism, setting a precedent for the annexation of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and other possessions.

As soon as the Treaty of Secession was signed and even before Congress appropriated the $7.2-million purchase price, a military government was set up in Sitka. Many years of neglect followed. Alaska was a lawless territory with no legal title to land. Violent criminals often went unpunished. The Army imposed order on native and white civilians, but only within the proximity of its six forts. Underpaid soldiers, who were far from home, often exploited the natives.

Statehood was debated for decades before becoming a reality. The statehood election was held August 26, 1958, and on January 3, 1959, Alaska became the 49th state. Alaskans thought this might

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result in self-determination. Within 15 years, however, many were already thinking statehood was a grave mistake.

The Alaskan independence movement began in the early 1970's, when the U.S. Congress passed legislation that provided clear title for the rights-of-way required to build the Trans-Alaska-Pipeline System (TAPS). Because of the energy crisis precipitated by the OPEC oil embargo, and because the pipeline project was granted defense priority status, the necessary laws were fast-tracked.

In January 1973, as the final challenges and disputes were settled by the courts, TAPS got the green light with some unusual wording about the right-of-way being granted. Customary rights-of-way are described as being so many feet "either side of the center line." The right-of-way for TAPS reads: so many "feet, either side of the pipeline." The TAPS pipeline is four feet wide and almost 800 miles long.

The outright theft of these 400-odd acres was the last straw for gold miners Joe Vogler, Fred Wilkinson, and their friends in the Fairbanks "Cuss and Discuss" Club—a small, informal group that met regularly to talk politics during the long winter. Fred Wilkinson is a third-generation Alaskan, born and raised in the gold fields. Joe Vogler, who was educated as a lawyer, had passed the bar in Kansas before moving to Alaska in the early 40's. "Cuss and Discuss" was not a bunch of wild-eyed radicals but mostly conservative businessmen; the pipeline right-of-way was the last straw for them, however, and their reaction was to formalize their organization. Alaskans for Independence (AFI) was born.

AFI held regular public meetings. Officers were chosen. Joe Vogler was elected chairman. Committees dug into the mountain of paper generated by Alaska's transition from territory to state, and investigation of the statehood vote revealed some interesting history.

At every turn, the people's right to choose their political affiliation freely had been stymied. The timing was bad; the election was held in August, at the height of the very short work season for farmers, fishermen, and miners. The indigenous people were not represented; since ballots were printed only in English, most of the native Alaskans were precluded from voting. And, by an act of Congress, some 41,000 military personnel and their 36,000 dependents were allowed to vote as residents without losing their established overseas status with all of its benefits—and it's hard to imagine any active service personnel voting against the wishes of the U.S. government.

International law was also at issue, as Vogler discovered. Since the adoption of the United Nations Charter by the U.S. Senate and its proclamation by President Harry S. Truman on May 29, 1945, the United States had been dutifully reporting, under Article 73, that Alaska was one of many "non-self-governing territories" under its rule. The final report for Alaska was sent in 1959.

The United Nations' General Assembly Resolution 742 and the attendant committee reports prescribed that inhabitants of non-self-governing territories be given three of four choices: remain a territory; become a separate and independent nation; accept commonwealth status; become a state. But the ballot used on April 24, 1956, offered Alaska only statehood—yes or no. The members of AFI became convinced that the vote had been illegal.

With donations from 1,500 card-carrying members, AFI placed a full-page advertisement in the May 9, 1978, Fairbanks daily *News-Miner* under the banner headline: "A VOICE IN THE LAND. ALASKA INDEPENDENCE PARTY." The article announced candidates for governor and lieutenant governor. Six years later, the state finally recognized this organization as "The Alaskan Independence Party" (AIP).

Joe Vogler headed the AIP ticket in the 1982 election. The results of that election and a challenge by Vogler to state election laws produced a 1984 court decision that put the AIP on the ballot again and lowered the percentage of votes required for state recognition of political parties. With states' rights as the main issue, Joe Vogler carried the party banner again in 1986, receiving nearly six percent of the vote statewide and nearly 20 percent in the Fairbanks area.

When Vogler opted not to run in 1990, the politically savvy former U.S. secretary of the interior (and former Republican) Walter Hickel accepted the AIP's nomination for governor along with running mate Jack Coghill. Running on the AIP's "Alaska First" platform, Hickel and Coghill were elected. Unfortunately, their outlook and loyalties were really still Republican. Governor Hickel did toss the AIP a few bones: His administration filed several lawsuits alleging violations of the statehood compact and appointed several AIP members to various commissions. That was all. The AIP suffered another blow in 1993 when Joe Vogler was murdered under peculiar circumstances.

Today, colonization continues in Alaska. Foreign-owned businesses are extracting the lion's share of the state's resources. British Petroleum controls Prudhoe Bay and the Alaskan Pipeline. Internationally registered cruise ships dominate the tour business on land as well as sea. Recently opened state-of-the-art mines are being operated by global mining companies. The salmon fishery has been so depleted by offshore operations that village subsistence fishermen have to fly in commercial dog food to feed their dog teams.

On the plus side, Alaska has taken some important steps to develop a national identity. For example, the state-owned Alaska Railroad is run as a for-profit corporation. Nationalizing the state's petroleum and natural-gas resources would represent the continuation of a natural progression toward the creation of the Alaska Oil and Gas Company. Such a move would be fully consonant with Alaska's constitution.

Alaska has sufficient financial and natural resources to function quite well as an independent nation. Native corporations created by Congress have grown into successful ventures with assets in the billions of dollars. An independent Alaska could still cooperate with the United States on matters of defense, allowing the Pentagon to lease land for military bases on a long-term basis. Alaska and the United States could remain trading partners as well.

To some, the removal of the Alaskan star from the American flag is a scary thought. To those still fighting Joe Vogler's good fight, it represents a chance for freedom—real freedom.

Dexter and Lynette Clark are founding members of the Alaskan Independence Party and coauthors of On Golden Ground.

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Letter From Kuwait

by Doug Bandow

Religious Freedom in the Gulf

◆

In Kuwait City, Kuwait, the outdoor *souk* or market offers a little of everything, from cosmetics to electronics to sandals. Hanging prominently is a prayer rug picturing the Nativity. The Christ Child smiles down on Kuwaiti traders as the Muslim call to prayer blares in the background.

Americans sometimes forget that other countries restrict religious worship. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, evangelism earns a foreigner jail time; apostasy results in death for a Christian convert. Last year, 14 Ethiopian and Indian Christians were imprisoned and then expelled from that country for privately worshiping in their homes.

A welcome exception to such Muslim intolerance is Kuwait. Barely a block from my hotel on a major street sit a Catholic church and a Coptic church. Another long block away is an evangelical church, the meeting point for several independent congregations.

Christian churches have been in the Gulf since the fifth century A.D. During Ottoman times, the British, Dutch, and Portuguese plied the trade routes and practiced their faiths. In 1909, American Dr. Arthur Bennett took up residence in Kuwait, beginning a medical practice that led to construction of a hospital and a church. Although the American Mission in Kuwait no longer exists, the Christian presence is bigger today, swelled by some 1.4 million foreign workers (there are just 800,000 native Kuwaitis).

There is a "very big Christian community" here, says Msgr. Francis Micallef, a Carmelite bishop, who presides over the Catholic church. Estimates of the number of practicing Christians run upward of a quarter-million. Most are Asians, Filipinos, and Indians, along with some Lebanese. "Before the [Gulf] war, there was a large community of Palestinians and Jordanians," he adds, but "because of what happened, they had to leave and have not yet come back."

Micallef figures there are between 60,000 and 80,000 Catholics in Kuwait. The first Carmelite arrived in 1947, to minister to foreign workers of the Kuwait Oil Company. The present church, the Holy Family Cathedral in the Desert, a large compound combining offices and worship space, was constructed in 1961. During Mass, the block surrounding the church is alive, with cars circling and parishioners streaming through the grounds. "We are free to have all our activities within the church and the church compound," says Micallef. And there is no mistaking the church: Three large crosses are embedded in the building, visible to all who drive or walk by.

There are even three private schools, run by nuns and priests, but "not church schools as such." Micallef is from Malta; his eight fellow priests include Filipinos, Lebanese, and Indians.

The adjoining St. Mark Coptic Church is smaller but still busy. The sanctuary holds up to 1,000, forcing Theophane Anba Bishoy and two other priests to run multiple services to meet the needs of an estimated 60,000 Copts.

Offices and living quarters are upstairs. "It's a small space, so we try to use it as effectively as we can," Bishoy explains. His church's activities extend beyond church grounds: During a recent festival, 10,000 to 12,000 people attended outside events.

Nearby sits the National Evangelical Church, the heir to the American Mission chapel. The sprawling complex contains several brick and stucco buildings, with a parking lot across the street. It is the most diverse religious community, made up of 15 different ethnic groups ranging from English to Nepalese to Korean to Arabian. The church operates as an "umbrella to every congregation," explains the Rev. Rafik Farouk, an Egyptian associate pastor. There is even an English-language Anglican minister. The Bible Society in the Gulf runs a bookstore within the compound. Mixed in with the Bibles, study guides, and devotional tapes are key chains, pens, mugs, baseball caps, and *Left Behind* videos.

Kuwait remains a Muslim country, of course. Some blocks have two mosques on them and the Grand Mosque alone covers a square block. Some concerns are universal: A poster in the Christian bookstore warns members to be alert for terrorism and to "maintain a low profile as much as possible." And Kuwaiti cleric Sulaiman Abu Ghaith turned up as a spokesman for Osama bin Laden.

Ghaith's activities, however were so shocking precisely because his case is extreme. Moreover, as in the United States, much of the dominant worship is formalistic, not social. Business trumps devotion: Dealmaking continues at the *souk* while the call to prayer wafts across the city.

Four women swathed in black *burqas* walk by, and a Kuwaiti companion comments acerbically on the "group of batmans." It is not unusual to see women in this most conservative dress shopping at a cosmetics stall in the market or a fashionable clothing store in the mall. The dress often reflects cultural, not religious, values.

Hardcore Islamic influence in Parliament—higher education has just been segregated by sex—concerns liberal Kuwaitis as well as Christians, but most of the former with whom I talked attributed it more to the government's weakness than extremists' influence. So far, Christians have not been targeted, as they have in other Muslim countries. "We have very good relations with the authorities," says Micallef. "We feel that we are respected and welcomed." Bishoy confirms that judgment: We have "no problem" with the government. Only three or four of the seven churches have official permission to operate, "but there is no problem for the others," he says.

Indeed, while the Coptic church might have to relocate because of a new road project, the government has promised "to find a solution." Bishoy's office sports photos of the *emir* and other Kuwaiti officials; on Farouk's wall hangs a photo of an ecumenical delegation meeting with a cabinet minister.

As members of a minority, Christian leaders work together. "We have an ecumenical spirit, and we meet regularly," Micallef explains. "We try to be supportive [of] one another." Farouk observes that his church "works with every congregation in Kuwait, and not just Kuwait only, but in the entire Gulf."

"Everything is free here," he says. At the church, you "see lots of people over here, many nationalities, many ethnic groups."

There is one significant limit, however. The churches minister to Christian believers; they do not proselytize.

"No, no, we don't even think of doing that," says Micallef. "We respect Muslim [sensitivities], and we don't want to give the sense of being missionaries." Lest there be any misunderstanding, Micallef adds: "We are here to cater to the spiritual needs of Christians here. If there were no Christians here, we wouldn't be here."

Bishoy echoes those sentiments. "We

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prefer not to go out to Muslims, to make problems for us." It is enough, he says, "just to try to serve our own people."

For a church that was built on Christ's admonition to make disciples of all the nations and which grew through evangelism, this is no small concession.

The restriction on spreading the Gospel seems to bother the National Evangelical Church the most. We are to minister to "Christian people only," says Farouk. "But any man can come here to ask, and we will respond." And many Kuwaitis have come to ask questions, he adds.

The church's sentiments are obvious from the back of its welcome sign, seen only by those leaving the compound: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

It is an irritating restriction. But it is rare to find a Muslim country where Christians are not routinely discriminated against, oppressed, or even killed. Kuwait is an oasis of freedom compared to some of her neighbors.

Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute.

Letter From Canada

by Sean Scallon

A Pocket Full of Sovereigns

◆

Downtown Montreal was full of revelers last March 10. Despite subzero temperatures, they hit the streets, some wearing little more than a smile. But each had a maple leaf somewhere, on a flag, a piece of clothing, a sign, or even in place of the proverbial fig leaf.

Such was the scene described by *Macleans* magazine's Benoit Aubin on that cold March day, when even the oft-estranged Quebecers, English-speaking and Francophone alike, jammed Bishop Street on the west end and St. Laurent Boulevard in the east, meeting together on St. Catherine Street to cheer the Canadian Olympic hockey team's first gold medal since 1952.

And not a single *fleur-de-lis* to be found.

From reading this account, you might guess that the sovereignty question in Quebec has been solved and that the danger of Canada's potential break-up—a question that dominated political discussion here for well over a decade—has passed. At least that is what Canada's establishment, from *Macleans* on down, would like to believe. And they have evidence that the pro-sovereignty, separatist forces are losing ground. While the Parti Québécois still holds a majority in the provincial National Assembly, it's currently in third place in nationwide polls and has lost several by-elections this past spring. Many political experts think it is just a matter of time before the PQ loses control. (The next provincial elections are in 2003.) Meanwhile, the Bloc Québécois, the federal-level Quebec separatist party, has gone from 54 seats and being the official opposition to the Liberals back in 1993 to only 38 seats after the 2000 national election. Polls show that, if a referendum on independence or sovereignty were held now, independence would garner only 42 percent of the vote.

Wasn't it just seven years ago that a mere 50,000 votes kept Quebec from taking its place as one of the nations of the world? Time, however, marches on, and so do the unseen forces that have helped to undermine, but not eradicate, separatist feeling. Aubin describes a populace tired of a constitutional question that has been a part of six elections and of a 12-year referendum.

Helping the federalist and hurting the sovereignty cause over the past seven years has been a strong economic tide, which lifted boats throughout the province and took away the impetus for leaving a Canada that, in the early 1990's, was near economic collapse. Then millions were spent by Ottawa's Council for Canadian Unity, budgeted by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in a Lincolnesque attempt to save the union, after the embarrassment of watching his home province nearly leave him a man without a country. Also helping the cause of federalism is the success that the Quebec government has had preserving the "distinct society" it wanted acknowledged in the Meech Lake Accord, even if this has been done by the odious squads of language police.

Thus, like many successful political parties, the Pequistes have no second act to their show, which leaves them with nothing to say right now. Even though they can claim, as Aubin cites, that Quebec's economic growth has been faster than Ontario's, that budget deficits have been slashed to nothing, that every second dollar of Canada's high-tech exports comes from Quebec, and that they have a Gross Domestic Product similar to Sweden's, none of these accomplishments exactly excite the activists who, over 30 years ago, were working the grassroots and holding rallies for René Lévesque. And by trying to emphasize good government, the PQ only highlights the blundering of Bernard Landry, who became premier and the Pequistes' leader upon the resignation of Lucien Borchard in March 2001. The opulence and elitism of one of the largest provincial cabinets in Quebec's history have only highlighted recent scandals involving Landry's cronies.

Thus the conundrum that the Pequistes face: Since the public has no burning desire to revisit the sovereignty question, and since even hardcore separatists are demoralized and resigned to seeing independence as a dream, the PQ does not talk about it very much anymore. By not doing so, however, they have nothing to campaign for and are no different from the Liberals in many of the stands they take on other issues. Without sovereignty, what is the point of the PQ? Many Quebec youths, having grown up in Pierre Trudeau's multicultural candyland, view the PQ as just another political party and the sovereignty question as one of their parents' hang-ups. Meanwhile, more conservative PQ supporters, particularly in rural areas, are switching their support to a new party, the Action Democratique du Quebec (ADQ), led by 32-year-old political *wunderkind* Mario Dumont, who wants to provide Quebecers with sovereignty from their own government, by calling for less provincial intervention and more local control of government services, particularly the health-care system. (Ironically, this was once the platform of the Republican Party.) The bye-elections helped the ADQ increase their numbers in the assembly to five, and they are, as I write, second behind the Liberals in the polls at 36 to 32 percent.

Thus the ADQ and the PQ are competing to see which picks up the sovereignty banner, or, as online columnist Peter Black says, "a toned-down version of what's left of René Lévesque's sovereignty movement," against the federalist Liberals. Whoever frames the question in this new way, gives the issue a new meaning for Quebec separatists, and stirs the dormant passions will be the winner.

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Before either party can do so, however, it must accomplish two tasks.

The first is to acknowledge that a majority of Quebecers do not want to live in an independent nation and never really did. After all, the *Canadiens* helped build the country just as much as the Anglos did. The stout *voyageurs* who trapped and transported furs and pelts through the hinterlands of Quebec, Ontario, and the Upper Midwest generated the money that made Canada possible. Their exploits live on in historical interpretations at Old Fort William outside Thunder Bay, Ontario, the trading-post-turned-tourist-site of the Northwest Fur Company, and in the paintings in restaurants, bed-and-breakfasts, hotel rooms, and resorts all along Lake Superior's western shore. Quebecers never hated Canada, and the threat of separation was more of a bluff, as one Quebec resident put it—a trump card used to get more out of its relationship with Ottawa and a way to protect its culture. Even if the referendum of 1995 had passed, its ambiguous wording would have kept the issue tied up in Canada's Supreme Court for years. In the meantime, Chrétien would no doubt have deployed the Canadian army throughout the province, making sure the separatists never assumed any kind of power. Now, the court has made the success of any future referendum virtually impossible with its "clear question" and "overwhelming majority" standards.

So with those delusions out of the way, the next task is to determine what kind of sovereignty Quebecers want within Canada. Quebec has taken its place among such quasinations of the world as Scotland, Wales, Catalonia, Montenegro, Flanders, Brittany, and Abkhazia. Globalization has weakened central governments and made possible the autonomy of distinct regions and the outright independence of nation-states in places like Eastern Europe. But at what price? Is sovereignty worth it when those same forces of globalization reduce autonomous regions and newly independent states to peonage to NATO, the European Union or the World Bank? Is having a flag, a national anthem, a seat in the United Nations, or athletes in the Olympics worth breaking long-standing ties with your former brothers-in-arms, if the end result is to make everyone weaker to the outside world—a world that wants us all to conform to its cultural standards and be a market for its goods? In other words, was it worth blowing Yugoslavia to hell, causing misery, death, and untold destruction, just so Croatia could get an IMF loan? Would Quebec's sovereignty be worth anything if it became part of George Soros's or Rupert Murdoch's empire?

Nationalists, separatists, and those in favor of sovereignty in the West have to answer these questions now, because they did not in the 1990's during the heady rush toward a freedom that, in the end, became a mirage. Macedonia may be "independent," free of a Yugoslavia on a map or in an encyclopedia, but most Macedonians know that their independence is an illusion when their own government has to acquiesce to "outside pressure" just to gain protection from the Albanian mafia. It simply chose to be under the protection of the mafia of Brussels/Washington, D.C., instead. Of all the new nations created since the end of the Cold War, only a few—Belarus, Slovakia, Armenia, Moldova, and Turkmenistan—have so far resisted attempts either to sell themselves or to be violated by the globalists and their native quislings.

A new Quebec sovereignty movement must not just ask for more power and more responsibilities from Ottawa in such areas as health care, taxation, trade, immigration, and education but must also have a voice in Canadian foreign policy, economics, defending the nation against Islamic extremism, preserving Canada's cultural identity and borders, and opposing encroachments from global financial organizations looking for their piece of the Canadian pie. A new Quebec sovereignty movement must address the still-thorny questions of identity, heritage, citizenship, and language within the province. No matter how many people speak French, and no matter how many signs or textbooks are written *en français*, Quebec cannot be a truly "distinct society" if immigrants make up the bulk of its population, particularly Muslims from North Africa determined to use Montreal as a base to launch terrorist attacks on the United States. Again, the same forces of globalization that can loosen ties between region and central government can easily undermine the region. The PQ dropped discussion of such issues in a fit of political correctness. If neither it nor the ADQ picks them up again, both will become irrelevant.

Sean Scallon is a reporter in Wisconsin who has vacationed in Canada the past three summers.

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Serbia's Presidential Election

The current president of the soon-to-be-defunct Yugoslav Federation, Vojislav Kostunica, has won the initial stage of Serbia's presidential elections, the first held since the fall of Slobodan Milosevic almost exactly two years ago. Kostunica garnered 31 percent of the vote, with Miroljub Labus—the "pro-Western, reformist" candidate supported by the "international community"—coming in second at 28 percent and the nationalist veteran Vojislav Seselj unexpectedly winning 22 percent. Kostunica will face Labus in a runoff on October 13.

The turnout, estimated at 56 percent, was low, partly because of unseasonably miserable weather. Since voter turnout in Serbia is traditionally lower by 10 to 15 percentage points in the second round, less than one half of all registered voters (the constitutional threshold for a valid election) will likely vote in the runoff. If that happens, Serbia will be plunged into a constitutional crisis. If the whole electoral cycle were to be repeated, it is uncertain that a greater number of Serbia's impoverished and disillusioned voters could be induced to go to the polls.

This would be good news for Zoran Djinjic, Serbia's kleptocratic prime minister and Labus's mentor, who fears that Kostunica would call an early parliamentary election if elected, thus depriving Djinjic of the mandate that he won thanks to Kostunica's endorsement in December 2000, in the aftermath of Milosevic's downfall.

This would be bad news for the nation, however. "My heart hopes that we'll have a winner, my mind is telling me that the second round will fail," says a senior Western diplomat in Belgrade.

It is somewhat ironic that both Kostunica and Labus still occupy their posts. This reflects the general lack of confidence in the proposed rearrangement of the Yugoslav federation under the European Union's tutelage, which should be completed by the end of the year.

Some Western analysts noted that the combined vote for "nationalist candidates" (Kostunica and Seselj, as well as Arkan's heirs, who won just under five percent) exceeded two thirds of the vote and deemed it alarming: Serbia stubbornly refuses to be "de-Nazified." They do not mention that Labus's defeat was even more significant in light of the massive support he received from the media. Serbia's television and press are flashier than a few years ago—*Politika*, under its new German ownership, has color photos on the front page—but they are also more depressingly uniform ("transition," "free market," "international community," "reforms," "entering Europe," *etc.*) and more rigorously guided by Djindjic's cronies than at any time under Milosevic. The pro-Labus bias of Serbia's state television and a dozen leading national and regional "independent" channels supported by Western NGO money (Studio B, B-92, *etc.*) was sometimes embarrassing, often tasteless, and always blatant. The source of the massive funding for the Labus campaign remains unknown, but it is unlikely to have come from domestic sources.

The U.S. ambassador in Belgrade, William Montgomery, who now acts like an imperial proconsul in an unimportant but subservient satrapy, was another Labus aficionado. (His lecture on Serbian politics at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., last summer was filled with the kind of anti-Kostunica rhetoric that would have warranted a quick recall if a "real" country had been in question.) The continuing preference of the Bush administration for Djindjic's camp, however, is puzzling. As James Jatras, former senior analyst with the U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee, noted recently,

> However justified Washington's preferences might have been in the past, they have long since become anachronistic in the post-9/11 era. Today American priorities must mean weeding out radical Islamic and organized crime elements in the Balkans with al-Qaeda links, and protecting the security of U.S. and allied forces. Here Serbia is not part of the problem but—under the right leadership—can become a significant part of the solution. . . . Far more important to U.S. interests than hauling the next indictee to the Hague would be Belgrade's following Bucharest's example in agreeing to exempt American personnel on Serbian soil from the International Criminal Court. . . . Working with Serbian enlightened patriotism, rather than crushing it, is a far more promising path to solid security and economic integration into the Western community. The same factors of moral stature and personal integrity—including strong support in the Church and the Army—that made Kostunica the only candidate in 2000 with a possibility of unseating Milosevic should today make him Washington's preferable prospective president of Serbia.

It should, but it did not. The results, nevertheless, indicated the limits of propaganda. In the end, it was the tangible effect of Labus's IMF-dictated brand of shock therapy—two thirds of Serbia's eight million people are at or below poverty level—and his perceived link with the hugely unpopular Zoran Djindjic that outweighed Western agitprop.

The real trouble for Serbia is that, even if Kostunica is reelected on October 13, he may be unable to halt the collapse of Serbia's economy and society, which was already under way before the anti-Milosevic popular revolt on October 5, 2000, thanks to the joint efforts of the old neocommunist regime and the Clinton administration; by now, it may be irreversible, unless a strong leader emerges who can inspire the nation and confront the kleptocrats. Kostunica's inability to do so thus far, his good intentions and personal integrity notwithstanding, is as disheartening to the nation he should lead as it was predictable to those who know him.

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FAMILY

God, Man, and Family

by Harold O.J. Brown

The first chapter of the Bible forms the basis of the Christian understanding of the nature and dignity of man—and woman: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). The next verse contains the first command given to the man and the woman: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it."

If we look closely at the first chapter of Genesis, we notice that this passage fully and thoroughly specifies the great and fundamental difference between man and the animals. With respect to fish, God says, "let the waters swarm," and, likewise, with birds; with respect to animals, He says, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds." This language suggests an indirect creation or formation of nonhuman living things and may be compatible with the concept of biological evolution as a process (but not as the ultimate explanation or First Cause). But man—male and female—is created through what theologians call God's "deliberate determination"—"Let us make man" and, in a particular relationship to God—"in our image."

Philosophers and theologians have long speculated about what it means to be made in the image of God. One of the more fruitful suggestions is to focus on the meaning of "male and female," where there is unity of essence or nature but a clear distinction between the sexes. This relationship reflects the triune nature of God, where the three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—share the same nature and are equal in power and glory but differ in their personal attributes. As early as the fourth century, Gregory Nazianzen argued that the equality and distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is paralleled by the equality and distinction of man and woman.

Thus, Genesis states two very significant realities that, today, are overlooked or distorted. The first is that man and woman are complementary forms of human being, without whose conjoined activity, as Salvador de Madariaga wrote, life would be neither possible nor enjoyable. They are equal, and that is important; they are fundamentally different, and that is also important.

Today, men are often beaten down and intimidated by charges of male chauvinism and sexism. Residual chivalry prevents them from asserting themselves by force, and, as a result, many young men act with a strange combination of timidity and coarseness, scarcely exhibiting those qualities that the ancients called "virtues." Intimidated and cowed young men will increasingly fail to fulfill the role in family and society for which God intended them and without which both family and society will continue to degenerate. And women will be the ultimate losers if the social order reverts to a *bellum omnium contra omnes* (the war of all against all). As an instructor of young men in a Protestant seminary, I sometimes cry out like Confederate Gen. George Pickett in the movie *Gettysburg* as he watched his division march into the Union guns: "What's happenin' to my boys?" It is alarming to note how many young men in their 20's seem unsure of themselves with regard to calling, purpose in life, or even sex, marriage, and family.

Genesis 1:26 and the verses following offers us the truth we need to resist the pressures of those who would obliterate the distinction between men and animals. It is not the possession of a soul or the quality of soul life that divides us from the animals. After all, humans, too, are *animae*, and the animals have that name because they seem to possess a kind of soul life. It is the image of God that distinguishes us from the rest of Creation. But what are we to make of our duality of being—male and female in one human nature?

In Genesis 2:4, we first encounter the sacred covenant Name of God, YHWH, which pious Jews refuse to pronounce. We know that, when we encounter it, we are in the presence of God's special, gracious purpose—whether for man and, later, woman as in Genesis 2, or for Noah, Abraham, Moses, or the sons of Israel, in later chapters. In Genesis 2:7, we read that man is *formed*, by the hand of God as it were, from the dust of the ground—no special material, but a special destiny, for God Himself breathed into the man's nostrils the breath of life.

After presenting to Adam the beauty of Eden, God again revealed his particular attention by saying, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an helpmeet for him." All of the animals were brought before him, but not one would suffice. Then the Lord God "caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, took one of his ribs . . . made a woman, and brought her unto the man."

This account makes three things very clear. First, the woman is made of finer stuff than the man: He is of the dust of the ground; she, of the man into whom the Lord God had personally breathed the breath of life. Second, the woman was conceived and formed as a helper "fit for him," not as a subject or a servant, but as a completion, without whom the man himself would have been defective.

Third, as the Lord God brought the woman to Adam, he cried out: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: and she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." The English word *woman* preserves the pun of the Hebrew: *ish* (man) and *ishah* (woman). Bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh parallels the Nicene Creed, when it states that the Eternal Son, who was to become incarnate in Jesus Christ, is "*consubstantialis Patri*" (of one substance with the Father).

The first divine command "Be fruitful, and multiply," requires what Madariaga called "the conjoined action" of both the male and the female, and this establishes both a divine and a natural-law principle for the establishment of the family, namely, that both father and mother are needed. At the Creation, men and women were present in equal numbers (one of each), and this equality of number, more or less, persists up to the present day—a natural-law argument for monogamy. It is however, in chapter two, when God is called the "LORD God," that we see more clearly that the divine purpose is monogamy.

Marry a wife, man; marry a husband,

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woman; be fruitful; be faithful. This is the human covenant that parallels the divine covenant, first, with the people of Israel and, later, with the Church, a fact emphasized by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians.

A grievous problem in medical ethics and the growing field of bioethics is the failure to consider the message of the first chapter of Genesis—that every human being, including those most recently conceived, is made in the image of the Creator and, accordingly, possesses a dignity superior to every other creature that God has created, as well as to all of the institutions that man has formed.

In the field of family and social ethics, however, another problem arises when we fail to consider the message of the second chapter of Genesis—that the woman and the man were made for each other by a special provision of the Creator. If we combine Adam's joyous cry ("Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh") with the Creation Mandate ("Be fruitful and multiply"), it becomes evident that the monogamous marriage, with children as they may be given, is God's purpose for us—man's divine creative mission on this planet, as Pitirim Sorokin put it.

The covenant of the natural family—a man and a woman, with children—is part of the divine plan and a basic element of society as God intended it. No human alterations can change this fact.

What then shall we say of "the family in America," as it now exists, under the assaults of a society that has forgotten its origin and its Creator?

Solzhenitsyn said it at Harvard in 1978, again in Moscow in 2000, and the Pope said it in Krakow last August: Men have forgotten God. In the United States, where religious traditions had a strong hold, the first great obligatory forgetting came in the early 1960's, when the U.S. Supreme Court prohibited prayer and the reading of the Bible in public schools. Following that, with an amazing rapidity and consequentiality, astonishing to all except those who have read and believed Romans 1, the United States began to dispose of the dignity of man and the covenants of marriage and the family. Although contraception had long been possible, it was the development of the birth-control pill from the later 1950's onward that began to rupture the connections between sex and marriage, and between sex and reproduction. In the 1960's, we had the flowering of the "sexual revolution" and the rise of homosexual activism. Even as unnatural sex was being practiced by many and tolerated by more and more, the connection between normal sexual congress and children was severed by the rise of abortion-on-demand, made into law by *Roe* v. *Wade* in 1973, and reinforced and elevated to the role of a nearly sacred rite by the subsequent decisions of our imperial Supreme Court.

There is a remedy for this situation—or, actually, there are two. We can remind ourselves—individually; in small groups, congregations, and fellowships; and, perhaps ultimately, in states and nations—of what we are told in Genesis 1 and 2: We were specially made, with a divine plan and purpose for one another and for our children. The second remedy is not a proposal, but rather a treatment: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether for good or for evil" (2 Corinthians 5:10). If we are the products of chance and necessity, we need not concern ourselves with marriage, children, homosexuality, terrorist attacks, White House dalliances, or any other thing, great or small. But that is a very big risk to take. If we are not the products of chance, but creatures of the Creator, made in His Image, then it is up to us to form our covenants with one another in the light of our great Covenant with Him, for "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Psalm 100:3).

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MUSIC

Next To The Last of the Singing Cowboys

by Eddie Allen

Bathed in the harvest-gold floodlights of Spring Grove, Minnesota's century-old opera house, Pop Wagner looks more like an American cowboy of the 19th century than the subject of the Remington painting that adorns his set. A few minutes before showtime, he makes one last inspection. Gazing out across the sparsely appointed, tin-ceilinged auditorium, he tests the footing on an ancient, wooden stage. It is a scene reminiscent of a thousand V.F.W. halls, Masonic temples, and Elks lodges.

He wears weathered leather boots, canvas britches, a Western shirt, and an unfurled kerchief that conceals everything between his Adam's apple and his sternum. A prodigious drooping mustache so completely obscures Wagner's mouth that you can't help but think he could easily fall back on a career in ventriloquism.

When he speaks, a slightly spasmodic cadence in an otherwise melodic cowboy drawl falls considerably short of a stutter. When he cocks his head to sing, the brim of his Silver Belly Rancher Stetson frames a face so smoothly complected that it belies the half-century of life already passed before it. You would think the voices of Woody Guthrie, Jimmy Rodgers, Gene Autry, and Hank Williams had been tossed into a blender and whipped into one. The result: cool, sweet, rich, and expensive as an after-dinner ice-cream cocktail.

It is impossible to determine if his looks and sound are theatrical affectations or the genuine article. He is surrounded by a handful of the instruments you would expect to find in any singing cowboy's toolbox—guitars, fiddles, Jew's harp, harmonicas—and an assortment of a working cowboy's truck and ware that includes a sawhorse sporting a Western saddle. A stiffly coiled catch rope hangs from its horn. For the audience, suspension of disbelief is immediate and complete.

Wagner picks up an old Epiphone guitar. He slips the strap over his shoulder, stands straight, and steps to the microphone. "Here's an old song called 'The Roving Gambler.'" The room falls still as he picks out the introduction. There is a sense of mild tension, as if everyone were on the midway of the Houston County Fair, waiting for a carnival ride to begin. He sings: "Wouldn't marry with a farmer, he's always in the rain; / The man I want to marry wears a great big gold watch chain." And everyone knows they're in for a pleasant ride. Those who have never seen Wagner's show before are instant fans. The rest are smiling, smugly acknowledging they are a new batch of disciples.

Gordon Robert Wagner is the oldest of

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three siblings. Raised by middle-class parents in the politically liberal environs of Yellow Springs, Ohio, Wagner was dubbed "Pop" by his fellow Boy Scouts. "A lot of Scouting organizations focus on achievements, earning merit badges and that kind of stuff. Not us. We were into outings. The adults were always putting me in charge. Somehow, I had a reputation for being the responsible one." Wagner's eyes light up, and a smile escapes the confines of that magnificent mustache. "They never knew all the stuff I was responsible *for*." This remark is followed by a deliberately vague account regarding the content of certain beverages he procured for some of these outings. "But it was all on the up and up," he adds. "We were all 16."

I caught up with Wagner in the high desert country of northeastern Nevada in late July 2000. Hoping to capitalize on the popularity of Elko's Cowboy Poetry Gathering, where he is something of a fixture, promoters of a festival with a hobo and railroad-history theme hired Wagner to serve as the artistic director of their ambitious four-day event. While the festival was heavily armed with talented veteran performers—U. "Utah" Phillips, Rosalie Sorrels, "Spider" John Koerner—Wagner's stage-management expertise proved critical.

"If you're not careful how you schedule, it's easy to get repetitive performances," Wagner told me over coffee at the Stockmen's Hotel and Casino Coffee Shop, base camp for the festival's performers. "Everybody loves 'The Wabash Cannonball'—*once*."

In typically modest fashion, he understated the importance of his role. Music workshops, poetry readings, film screenings, and main-stage performances proceeded smoothly through four days of triple-digit temperatures. You need not be at these affairs for very long to witness the unpleasant results of natural pre-performance jitters mixing with occasionally enlarged egos.

"That kind of crap just doesn't seem to happen where Pop's in charge," one of the performers told me, while tuning up backstage. "He's such a good guy that his character rubs off on folks around him. I don't think he even knows it."

Wagner's stage-management skills went unnoticed by the audience; his performance did not. The Elko gig occasioned a reunion with his younger brother, Bodie, a fine musician and performer in his own right who makes his home in tiny North San Juan, California. Any idea of distance between the two dissolves on stage. They create a harmony that is not only musical but visual and spiritual.

Wagner was singing for a long time before he became a singing cowboy. He claims no recollection of a boyhood fascination with the cowboy myth that was so prevalent in 1950's America. "I don't suppose I cared any more about becoming a cowboy than I did about being a fireman," he says. But he credits Hollywood characters of the era, portrayed by the likes of Roy Rogers and Gene Autry, for making cowboy music popular. Declaring a preference for what he calls the more traditional, "rough-edged" music, he says, "You wouldn't hear many actual cowboys singing in multi-voice harmony like the Sons of the Pioneers." He adds, "It's not part of my repertoire, but it's great music. I love listening to it."

Wagner started playing music in high school. A couple of lessons on guitar and piano got him started. Beyond that, he is self-taught. Pleased with his progress and perseverance, in 1964 his parents rewarded him with the round-shouldered guitar he still plays. "They could've got it cheaper, but they didn't know how easy it was to get a discount on a new guitar. They paid full retail price, a hundred and sixty dollars," he remarks with tongue in cheek. The guitar is worth many times its original cost.

In November, Wagner picked me up at my home in his extended-cab Dodge pickup. I crowded my stuff behind the front seat, and we headed out on the 450-mile trip to his next gig. He reminisced about his days at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, where he was instrumental in organizing the Northland Folk Festival. "We booked some great acts. We got Utah Phillips, Bill Hinkley and Judy Larson, and Guy Carawan, and the whole thing just took off. I was invited back as a performer for the twenty-fifth or thirtieth anniversary of the festival. I don't remember which it was now, but it was cool."

Conversation about college and the 60's led to a discussion of the Vietnam War. A Quaker upbringing, a knee injury, and the fact that he was a college student helped Wagner maintain his status as a civilian. Inevitably, we shared stories of friends and loved ones who were less fortunate. Equally inevitable were the silent miles that followed that conversation.

James Carmouche

Wagner with his Stetson hat, Epiphone guitar, and prodigious drooping mustache

War or no war, by the end of the 1960's, Wagner was caught up in the renewed popularity of traditional music styles, which were increasingly appealing to young American artists in a sort of backlash to the invasion of British pop. As quickly as festivals, coffeehouses, nightclubs, and beer joints were becoming venues for exploiting that popularity, Wagner was expanding his repertoire and his circle of friends and connections in a growing folk-music community.

From tiny Ashland, Wagner began to make pilgrimages to St. Paul and Minneapolis, where he found a flourishing music scene. He first came seeking to book talent for his fledgling folk festival, then to play gigs of his own. "One of the places I played was the Triangle Bar. The stage was eight feet above the floor. You had to climb a ladder to get up to it." He chuckles, "Some nights I was glad to be that far up from the crowd in that place. They paid ten dollars a set. Since I came from so far away, they used to give me a set two nights in a row. They were pretty good, that way."

Soon, he was a resident. He stayed with friends or bunked at the West Bank School of Music—an old house with a sign on it—where local musicians combined marketing efforts and gave lessons.

It was during these early West Bank days that he was invited to a chili supper rustled up by Mary DuShane. On the guest list was Bob Bovee, another musi-

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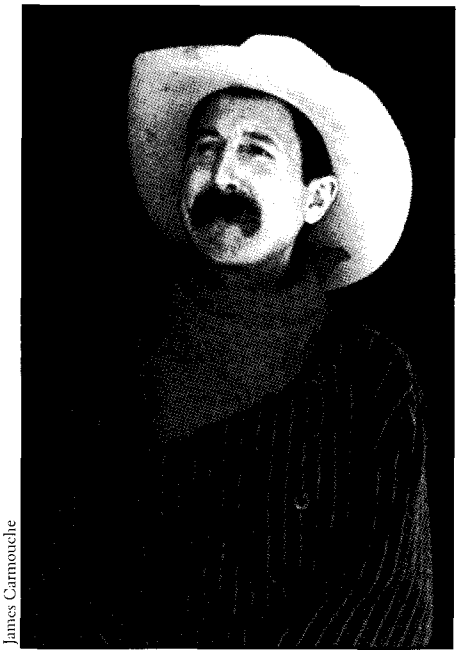

James Carmouche

Wagner is cheerful in all weather

cal cowpoke who had recently drifted into town from Nebraska. I asked Bovee to chronicle the events that led to his meeting with Pop Wagner. "I had just broken up with my first wife. I sold about everything I owned and hit the road. Stevie Beck was an old friend. She was living in the Cities, and, somehow, I ended up on her steps. The New Riverside Cafe had just opened up, and Stevie and I went in there and started playing one day." When the impromptu performance led to an offer from the owners for a return engagement, Bovee recalls, "We said 'Yeah!'" Then he laughs out loud, "We didn't have any material to speak of, but we had us a job. We went out and worked up a set—some pretty basic stuff. It was around this time when Stevie invited me to a supper. She wanted me to meet this guy, Pop Wagner. Well, we hit it off pretty good."

Pretty good, indeed. Friendship led to a musical partnership that has lasted nearly 30 years. Both will quickly correct the misconception that they are no longer partners just because they don't regularly perform together anymore. Bovee now lives and works with his musician wife, Gail Heil, in Spring Grove, Minnesota. The three of them occasionally team up to play for dances. A year ago, they went into the studio and laid down five tracks of old traditionals to fill out a compact-disc reissue of *Pop Wagner & Bob Bovee* (1977).

For Wagner, the meeting with Bovee was a turning point. While Wagner had fallen in love with aspects of the American West, Bovee was actually a product of it. His uncle Ted Mason was a working cowboy in Wyoming, and his grandfather "Bud" Mason was a horseman—"The best one I ever knew," asserts Bovee—and "head skinner" on major "dirt work" operations in the 20's and 30's, managing several other teamsters and hundreds of animals in the construction of roads and railroads. "He was not a cowboy, though he could do all the things cowboys do," says Bovee. Bud married and settled in the Missouri River bottoms near Bellevue, Nebraska. His wife's mother, who grew up on a neighboring farm, recalled seeing Jesse James when she was a girl.

This was the environment of Bovee's childhood. "I had my own horse from the time I was six years old, rode in horse shows as a teenager, and rodeoed a little bit in college. You could call me a cowboy, but I never worked cows. Go figure!"

Bovee brought a wealth of songs, stories, and personal experience to the partnership. He also brought his guitar, harmonica, autoharp, singing, and writing talents.

Had there been any doubt about Wagner's musical direction, it was now *Westward, ho*. Wagner and Bovee played dance halls, saloons, coffeehouses, festivals, and street corners in Denver, Salt Lake City, Pocatello, Spokane, Portland, San Francisco, and points between. They hopped freight trains and hitchhiked, writing songs along the way. From this period came Wagner's "Whiskey In My Glass," an astounding lyrical articulation of the emotional flip side of wanderlust. They both gave the same reply when asked about their choice of transportation: "Neither one of us owned a car."

Few occupations are so compatible with wanderlust, and, from here on out, ordering the events in Wagner's life would daunt the best of biographers. His work has taken him to places that can't be reached by rail or thumb. "We went to Paris and never saw the Eiffel Tower. We were so busy runnin' around and playing music and meeting new people, it never even crossed my mind to look for it."

Pop Wagner has performed in almost every state in the union. During a stint in Alaska, he was delivered from gig to gig by bush pilots. "There were times we'd be flying into some little village, and the visibility would be so bad that the pilot couldn't see to make a landing." Wagner tightens his grip on the steering wheel and leans back to illustrate. "He'd just pull up out of the weather and say, 'We'll just go find someplace else for you to play.'"

For years, Wagner has aptly been referred to by entertainment writers as "Minnesota's Renaissance Cowboy." He has immersed himself in the musical culture of the places he goes and the people he meets. His fascination with Cajun music, spawned by his encounter with D.L. Menard and the Balfa Brothers at the 1974 Smithsonian Institute Folk Festival, culminated in the release of his 1986 recording, *Disco on the Bayou*. He can tell you about folk traditions in Japanese music. He played in Japan with Stoney Lonesome, a popular Twin Cities bluegrass combo. If any doubt remains about the diversity of Wagner's musical experience, consider the reviews he received from the *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle* for his portrayal of the Folksinger in Benjamin Britten's opera *Paul Bunyan*, staged and recorded by the Plymouth Music Series. A clever reviewer tagged Wagner "The Eclectic Horseman."

We can be sure that the Twin Cities are likely to remain Wagner's "trail's end." For more than 20 years, he has been married to Thea Johansen, a chiropractor, seemingly the ideal occupation for a cowboy's gal. They live in St. Paul, and, in nearby Grant Township, Wagner boards his palominos. Not content merely to play the part of a cowboy on stage, Wagner has learned to rope and ride. When he's not making appearances on the road, he leads trail rides in the country and sometimes performs on horseback.

Wagner's early performances brought him to the attention of a morning disc jockey at Minnesota Public Radio affiliate KSJN. The d.j. was a shy person who told stories about the provincial inhabitants of a make-believe town near Anoka. He played records from a collection so eclectic that his listeners grew to expect a selection by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to segue into the Beach Boys' "Surfin' Safari." Wagner recalls, "Back then, the KSJN studio was at ground level and had big picture windows so you could look right in and see the broadcast taking place. You didn't get booked on that show. You'd stand outside with your guitar case in the middle of the winter and hop up and down and wave your

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arms. He'd be sipping coffee through that big beard he wore then. When he saw you out there he'd just gesture for you to come in out of the cold, and that was all there was to it. You were on the radio."

The overwhelming popularity of Garrison Keillor's *Prairie Home Morning Show* led to the live Saturday-night broadcasts of *A Prairie Home Companion*. Everyone within earshot of the MPR signal tuned in. Wagner was a regularly featured performer. When the show went national, Wagner went with it. Without hesitation, he testifies, "There's no question that the exposure I got on that show played a very big part in my ability to get work. It played a huge part. It still does." No shortage of ink was spilled by writers and critics over how national broadcast changed the original show. A good portion of it was negative, and some of it was fair. Wagner's straightforward response: "Garrison is a smart, funny guy. He had a great idea at the right time and place, and he worked hard to make that show succeed. Just look at all the spin-offs that came from that show." Wagner rattles off a list of program titles, extending a finger from a clenched fist for each one that comes to mind. Soon, the fist is gone, and his hand is spread open. He stops listing when he realizes that he can't continue without completely releasing the steering wheel. "Well, you get the point," he says. And we drive on.

The predicted travel time turns out to be about three hours short. A side trip to pick up the writer, the normal crawling pace of traffic through Chicago, and the hour lost to the time-zone change accounted for our late arrival in Kalamazoo. Exhausted, I stagger into the bathroom of an all-night convenience store, while Wagner digs out a local map and the address of our hosts.

For many good reasons, veteran performers of Wagner's ilk politely fend off offers of housing from the promoters of their shows. Being a guest in the home of a total stranger, very likely a fan, carries the potential of unexpected demands. In this case, economics dictated an exception. An anticipated school performance in the same locale had prompted an agreement for a lower-than-usual fee for the evening concert. When the school gig did not materialize, Wagner took a bit of a blow to his bottom line. He shrugs off such occupational hazards philosophically. "A lot of times people ask me how many days out of the year I do shows. I don't even know how to answer. I might go for a month and work almost every day. Sometimes I might do two, three, or four shows in a single day. County fairs and festival performances are like that. Sometimes I might only do two or three shows in a month. How do you count them? I don't mess with it till the end of a year. Heck, if it weren't for the income tax, I probably wouldn't even count them at all."

In the next 36 hours, we are guests in three different homes, each a household of volunteers of the nonprofit organization promoting Wagner's appearance. I am housed with the working class; Pop, with the middle class; and both of us are fed by the upper-middle. Despite different values and lifestyles, they share a love of folk music. I am afforded nearly the same celebrity status that he is, and Wagner does not mind sharing the spotlight; in fact, he seems grateful.

He is expected to be at the venue fully two hours before curtain time. He does not brood over the loose application of the term "venue." Neither does he waste time searching for a dressing room. In a bustle of activity, a half-dozen volunteers are setting up chairs, a sound-and-light system, and a too-springy-for-lasso-tricks portable stage. An equal number are in the kitchen, brewing coffee and heating cider in industrial-size coffee urns. Duncan Hines brownie mix is stirred in large, stainless-steel bowls and placed in the oven. A noisy popcorn machine creates an olfactory cacophony. Someone observes that we are about to see a cowboy act in the "Colt" Center, a kind of student union for the Comstock High School. Wagner uses a well-rehearsed response when kids ask why he doesn't carry a gun: "I don't need a gun. I've got a guitar."

Despite blustery winds and a driving snowfall, a crowd begins to trickle in. The extremely friendly locals are delighted to impart their knowledge of local lore. "Kalamazoo," I am told, "is the 'Celery City,' though hardly anyone grows celery anymore." One man consults a telephone book in an effort to answer my question about the population. "What are you looking in there for? Are you going to call someone who knows?" comes the friendly ribbing from a neighbor. I am introduced to the fellow who will introduce Wagner, and, when somebody tells me that our master of ceremonies sells lingerie, I am compelled to ask for his business card. He obliges. I dare Wagner to tell the audience that the emcee is in women's underwear. He guffaws at the suggestion but prudently declines.

For the next hour, Wagner is a kind of Festus Hagen with a bath. He opens with a slightly irreverent rendering of Woody Guthrie's "Grand Coulee Dam," excessively enunciating the stanza in which the word *hum* is rhymed with *aluminum*. The audience is at once struck with the absurdity of the song's grandiose sentiment and bizarre rhyming scheme. Guthrie must have been joking when he first penned the lyric; 65 years later, Wagner gets the laugh.

When he follows with a hilarious cowboy lilt called "The High-Toned Dance," in which the ode's protagonist declares, "I could feel my neck a-burnin' from her nose's breathin' heat," several of my ribs started to ache. Wagner shows no mercy. He follows with a short literary lecture regarding the genre of cowboy poetry and a little background about the annual Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko. "Now that you know a little bit about cowboy poetry, is there anybody who thinks they might like to go out there and see it?" He peers through the stage lights at the somewhat nonplussed audience members, who are unsure if they are supposed to respond. "The reason I'm askin' is, I was wonderin' if I could git a ride with ya if yer headin' atta way."

His impeccably timed, corny humor delights the audience. It cannot be characterized as wit; no person is ever targeted. It is not self-deprecating. His character's folksy wisdom counters any pretension of challenged intellect. The lyrical genius of "The Impressionist 2-Step," Wagner's hilarious Cajun-style paean to the celebrated school of art, further betrays any effort to perpetuate such notions.

Characteristically, Wagner is quick to share credit for the song's inspiration. "Does anybody here like art? No, not the guy. The stuff. . . . My friend Jack Hansen said to me one day, 'Pop, don't you think it's time somebody wrote a song about French impressionist painters?' Well, I thought about it for a minute, and I knew he was right. We wrote it together. We got the first line of the chorus right off of a sign in one them fancy museums over there in Paris. That's in France."

Monet concerned himself with atmosphere and light.

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He worked on lots of canvasses at
the same time and as it got darker
he just painted on down the line.
Manet did some stuff that's really
out of sight.
Some other guys in that league
were Rodin, Cezanne, Lautrec
and don't forget Paul Gauguin.

Later, Wagner bristles when I suggest he is dealing in comedy. "I don't do comedy. It's humor," he corrects me, with noticeable restraint. Pressed for a distinction, his tone quickly softens. "Comedians use their material like a weapon. They hit you right over the head with it. Humor is something that's just laid out in front of people. They can think it over and choose what they want to do with it."

He recalls the time an agent convinced him to do his rope-trick act in a comedy club. The agent was also a comedian and booked an appearance at which he opened for Wagner. "The guy was a total professional. He opened the show and used his whole stage time to set up my act. The audience was totally prepared for what I was going to do. It went perfectly. They loved me. It was great. But when I had to open a show myself, without the set-up, people didn't know what to think, and I fell flat on my face." Wagner shakes his head and lets out a "Whooeee!" as if he's just been saved from a raging bull by the rodeo clowns. "I'll *never* do that again." Strong testimony from a man who has proved equal to practically every conceivable type of performance.

Wagner moves the microphone stand aside and loudly declares, "These are acoustic lariats." He spends the next 30 minutes weaving impressive lasso tricks with a constant delivery of corny jokes and puns that has the crowd both mesmerized and rollicking.

Several years ago, Wagner and a handful of other entertainers rented a large room and taught themselves this classic slice of show-business Americana by repeatedly watching Will Rogers' 20-minute silent film, *Ropin' Fool*. "I also got hold of a book on rope spinning. If there was ever something almost impossible to learn from a book, this is it," he told me. "But I read it over about a hundred times and kept watching Rogers do the tricks on screen. It was Sean Blackburn who gave me the idea of mixing in the humor. He got me into ropes."

At intermission, Wagner comes off stage and out of character, mingling with audience members, shaking hands, and graciously accepting compliments and the typically restrained adoration of his Midwestern audience. They seem a little relieved for a break from the laughter and for the assurance that his stage persona is, in fact, more than skin-deep. It doesn't take long to see that the real Pop Wagner is just as friendly, funny, and as much of a square shooter as that "feller" in the show.

Everybody gets a brownie and coffee and settles back into his seat. The second half of the show has a different pace and feel. There are plenty of laughs but also more traditional cowboy music and storytelling. Wagner respectfully pays homage to the traditions and mythology of cowboying. He parcels out little gems of Western history and speaks with deep respect of elders and mentors in this unique odyssey that has been his life. He talks about his friend, Glen Ohrlin, who rodeoed in the 40's and 50's. Ohrlin was a bronc rider who, unlike many in the trade, did not squander his well-earned prize money. He saved it up and bought a ranch in Arkansas, where he free-ranges cattle and is a practicing folklorist. He occasionally brings his cowboy songs, stories, and poems to audiences within a reasonable distance of his busy spread. Wagner cherishes his opportunities to share a billing or just to spend time with Ohrlin. "This guy is the real thing," he says. The beautiful cowboy lament "Red River Valley" is Wagner's appropriate closing.

Another bustle of activity returns the room to its original state. Wagner packs up his instruments and takes care of business with the moneychangers and the volunteer vendors of his CDs, tapes, and T-shirts. Wagner, members of the three households that accommodated us, and I meet at the home of my hosts. Well into the night, we share coffee, tea, beer, and stories to celebrate the event's success. It is evident that these people do not regularly socialize in one another's homes. In the course of the backslapping and laughter, I think about how social and class differences have disappeared and about the backstage remarks I had heard in Elko. "He's such a good guy that his character rubs off on folks around him. I don't think he even knows it."

On the ten-hour trip back to my house (which is three hours from Wagner's home), we deal with the fatigue and grubbiness that accompanies such marathon driving. We negotiate traffic snarls in Chicago and an icestorm in Wisconsin that slows us to a crawl for two hours, but Wagner is cheerful in all weather. I try to get him to complain about the lifestyle. The best I can get out of him is, "I guess the hardest part of doing what I do is the amount of time you have to be away from home. That's not easy for me. And even though she is always supportive, I know it can't be too easy for Thea, either. But I do it because I love doing it. I love the feeling I get when I perform, and I love to hear people laughing and clapping. I'd be lying if I said I didn't." There is a thoughtful pause before he adds, "This is the only thing I know how to do. I couldn't do anything else."

Eddie Allen is a freelance writer who works from his home in Trempealeau, Wisconsin, overlooking the Mississippi River.

LIBERAL ARTS

MORE PORN EQUALS MORE BABIES?

"Ten days ahead of national elections, a member of the Christian Democratic women's federation shocked her conservative party colleagues by calling for more pornography on television.

"Teres Kirpikli, a 35-year-old mother of three, said she wanted to help boost the Swedish economy by encouraging people to have more children.

"'I want erotica and porn on television every Saturday and all day. Then people would feel like having more sex,' Teres Kirpikli told the Associated Press on Thursday. 'I think most people like porn, even though they don't want to admit it.'"

—*from an Associated Press story (September 5, 2002)*

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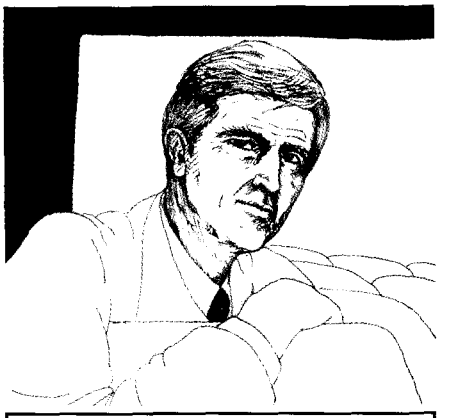
by George McCartney

Unutterable Visions, Perishable Breath



S1m0ne

Produced and Distributed by New Line Cinema
Written and directed by Andrew Niccol

One Hour Photo

Produced by Catch 23 Entertainment, Laughlin Park Pictures, and Madjak Films
Written and directed by Mark Romanek
Distributed by 20th Century Fox

Why do we expect perfection, especially when it comes to romance, that most mercurial department of our uncertain lives? There is a sex distinction here, of course. Men are far more likely than women to succumb to the full force of this diseased yearning. Despite the ceaseless warnings of poets and novelists, in the face of painful experience itself, guys go on hankering for the ideal woman, the goddess whose incandescent beauty and infinite charm will cushion life's manifold disappointments. (Most members of the gentler sex are far too clearheaded to harbor such ridiculous notions. A damsel may love a man to distraction, but she rarely takes such leave of her senses as not to notice her lug's shortcomings. Her delusion is to believe she can reform him.) Sometimes this madness leads to great things. Think of Dante reaching for the ever-elusive Beatrice only to find himself at last in paradise, the one realm that admits perfection. More often, however, our lunacy leads to disillusionment and, sometimes, disaster. Although he had an inkling of the distance between the ideal and the real, Jay Gatsby chose to wed his unutterable visions to Daisy Buchanan's all-too-perishable breath, which turned out to be fatally sour.

Two recent films, each in its own way, display this folly vividly. It's the centerpiece of Andrew Niccol's *S1m0ne*, a film that strives to be a witty variation on the theme. The story begins promisingly. Al Pacino is Viktor Taransky, a modestly talented film director given to making such high-toned films as *Straw Gods*, *Sunrise Sunset*, and, my favorite, *Eternity Forever*. Viktor thinks himself an uncompromising artist. When we first meet him, however, he is reduced to sorting colored candy pieces to please Nicola, his latest leading lady, played to petulant perfection by Winona Ryder. She does not want to see red among her sweets. It is written into her contract—which also stipulates that seven packs of cigarettes, three open, must always be within her reach while she is in the employ of a studio. Despite Viktor's pains to please her, Nicola quits on him with a third of the film still unshot. This sends Viktor into a rant about actors: "It's not like the old days. We were the ones who told them what to do! We could change their names then!" A studio executive, who also happens to be his ex-wife (Catherine Keener), gently points out that he was not in the business then and rather less gently tells him he is no longer wanted in the business now.

But all is not lost. Viktor is approached by a crazed programmer who uses computer graphics to simulate Viktor's ideal: a stunningly beautiful electronic actress entirely compliant with his every wish. She even passes Viktor's nostalgic test: He is free to name her as he sees fit. He snips seven letters from the graphics program's title, SimulationOne, and "Simone" is born—or, as he puts it, "A star is digitized!" Viktor could not be more pleased as he puts this creation through her paces on a giant computer screen. Not only can he make Simone's image do whatever he wants, he can alter its physical specifications. She comes with all the features of Hollywood's feminine pantheon—the body of Sophia Loren, the grace of Grace Kelly, the smile of Audrey Hepburn, and more. When he wants, Viktor can even deepen her Audrey dimple or tone down her Meryl Streep-ness. Best of all, he does not have to direct her. Instead, he sits at his console, acting her role as her image and voice perfectly mimic his every gesture and intonation. Soon, he is having conversations with his creation. "I'm so relaxed around you. I'm so much more myself." (Not surprising sentiments from a man who has been dumped by two wives.) At last, he has a truly selfless woman as fully devoted to him as he is.

In no time at all, Viktor finishes his film by pasting Simone's image into the scenes he has already shot, thereby replacing and extending Nicola's performance. Needless to say, the movie enjoys astonishing success, and Simone's image stirs such a vortex of frenzied fan worship that the media demand to interview her. When Viktor announces that she does not do interviews, a tabloid suitably named the *Echo* suspects dirt and begins to dig. After Simone's second hit in Viktor's *Eternity Forever*, the harried director relents and arranges for Simone to be interviewed on television by remote camera relay. Speaking through her voice, Viktor has her explain her reclusive life. "I think actors talk too much," she confides. (Who would disagree?) Furthermore, she believes her "work should speak for itself" and considers herself an "instrument" of her favorite director, Viktor, a position with which he completely concurs—having spoken it himself through her pixilated being. Lest we miss the point, Viktor's 12-year-old daughter, in another scene, reads *Pygmalion* on her laptop.

All this should have added up to a marvelously funny satire of Hollywood's reflexive insincerity and our image-mad popular culture, wrapped in a bemused meditation on the distance between the real and the ideal. Sadly, Niccol does not bring it off. This kind of material requires the agility of a Preston Sturges and the stylized performances of an Eddie

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Bracken or a William Demarest. Instead, Niccol directs with lumbering pace, while Pacino tries to make his hound-dog eyes look alternately panicked and mischievous. Willing performer though he is, Pacino is too captive to the method to be so spry. As Simone, Canadian model Rachel Roberts has the poise and posture of her former profession, but she has not yet shed her mannequin manner. With her honey-blond hair, angular face, affectless middle-distance gaze, and elongated body, she looks more striking than comely. She is fine as an icon, but she never melts her photo-frozen image with any show of personal warmth. It is difficult to believe the mass audience would go gaga for such a vacant abstraction of beauty. Furthermore, the scenes in which Pacino plays her role in tandem with her image are disconcerting. While they are Pacino's funniest moments, they undermine the film's premise. He seems more feminine than the supposedly irresistible Simone. What is needed is another Ava Gardner, whose bewitching turn as Aphrodite illuminated the otherwise mediocre film adaptation of Kurt Weill's play, *One Touch of Venus*. Gardner was not much of an actress, but her sloe-eyed sensuality enabled her to move from playing a cheap department-store statue of the love goddess to incarnating her incendiary charms once she stepped off her plaster pedestal.

Despite its shortcomings, *S1m0ne* is worth seeing. It is intermittently amusing and, for a Hollywood product, unusually thoughtful. It is best when acknowledging that the human struggle to achieve the ideal is often a species of narcissism. Like Viktor, we sometimes find our daily lives so displeasing that we cannot help trying to smuggle our own brand of *Eternity Forever* into the here and now, at whatever the cost to those who do not share our particular vision of perfection.

One Hour Photo is also about the yearning provoked by glossy images. Seymour Parrish (Robin Williams) is smitten with them. He is not focused on a romance, however. His longing takes a more domestic turn.

Seymour develops film in a suburban SavMart and gives signs of being dangerously obsessed with his work. Not only does he develop the pictures of his customers' birthdays, vacations, and graduations, he studies them. He is looking for signs of genuine human happiness and finds them in the smiling faces of Nina and Will Yorkin and their nine-year-old son, Jakob. Although he only knows them from their occasional visits to his counter to leave and pick up film, he is so beguiled by the perfect life he discerns in the snapshots of their large, modern home that he makes additional prints of their orders and tacks them to the living-room wall of his modest apartment, where he lives alone. The Yorkins know nothing of this. When they think of Seymour at all, he's Sy the photo guy, just another interchangeable member of the vast servant class that tends to their privileged needs.

The weirdness of Seymour's project never seems to occur to him, even when he begins to fantasize that he is a part of the Yorkin household. We watch with growing dismay as he takes steps to make his fantasy become a reality. When Nina and Jake pick up their latest prints, Sy gives them larger ones than they had ordered, at no extra cost. He starts driving by their home and showing up at Jake's soccer practices. Noticing Deepak Chopra's book *Path to Love* in Nina's shopping bag, he buys a copy and makes sure she sees him reading it. This gives him leave to quote the self-help guru's banal aphorism: "The things we fear the most have already happened to us." She is surprised he would have such an "intellectual interest" (as she calls it) and is tactless enough to say so. Chopra is one of those feel-good "philosophers" who now and again catch the fancy of suburban deep thinkers. Here, however, his words turn out to be perfectly apropos to what is coming in this tightly wound, carefully plotted psychological thriller. It does not take long to realize that a terrible denouement is on the way. Few, however, will anticipate the peculiar nature of its terror.

This is Mark Romanek's first film. Though not without flaws, it is a work of genuine distinction. With the partial exception of the last 15 minutes, when he annoyingly resorts to some misleading editing to keep us guessing, Romanek displays an uncanny cinematic sense in almost every frame. Take his alternating shots of the department store and the Yorkin home, for instance. Sy's workplace has that unearthly fluorescent glow common to all such establishments. The interior of the Yorkins' household, on the other hand, is filled with luxe appointments gleaming ominously from under a dark pall. The contrast between commercially contrived sunniness and upscale domestic angst could not be more tellingly framed. Williams, whose acting often walks the border between the manic and the smarmy, is admirably restrained. With his pushed-in face and squint eyes, he makes Seymour a completely credible sadsack. He's the kind of person who exists on the margins of our vision everywhere we go in modern America: the middle-aged, potbellied clerk in uniform, a nondescript functionary whom we make it a practice to ignore. We do not want to know anything about their minimum-wage lives for fear that we would have to sympathize with their defeats and disappointments. They are the excludables. Better to make our purchases and move on. As the store manager who detects Sy's eccentricities on surveillance television cameras, Gary Cole gives another dead-on performance, never a gesture or intonation out of place. Although his part is small, his scenes with Williams are a study in the kind of managerial coldness that the little folk of our powerful nation must endure daily. (It is a mystery to me why Cole does not get more and bigger parts. Anyone who can hold the screen with Robin Williams has more than proved his talent.) Romanek has also drawn a compelling performance from the pretty but usually bland Connie Nielsen, who perfectly conveys a spoiled, affluent wife. She means well but is too dedicated to "serious shopping" to take any real notice of others.

This is a thriller that cuts deeply into our unacknowledged class divisions. It also reports stingingly on how hostage we are to those perfect images that so often belie the truth of our lives. C

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Western Swing

The Hollows, Hasty and Happy, were hardly ever sure where they were. At times, they weren't sure *who* they were, either, but it never mattered for them because they were very, very rich.

Hasty was from Chicago originally, and Happy from Mississippi, where she had earned half a degree from Ole Miss. In the days when they still had identities, individually and as a couple, as well as a primary residence (a co-op apartment on the Gold Coast where they spent as much as three months out of the year) and were therefore in a position to entertain, the Hollows had been known to their friends as Gucci and Pucci, respectively. Since they sold the co-op, bought a string of condos around the country in places that included West Palm Beach, Sea Island, Oklahoma City, Santa Fe, Jackson Hole, and Monterrey, and stopped going out except to take a taxi to and from the nearest airport, they hadn't bothered with friends or clothes either, except for twenty or thirty dressing gowns apiece by Ralph Lauren.

Their drink was Johnny Walker Black, and plenty of it. Hasty took his straight on the rocks, but Happy preferred hers with soda water and a lime twist. After more than thirty years, both Hollows smoked Players cigarettes, chiefly because it had become a habit for them and they could no longer taste tobacco, anyhow. They would get up at around 2:30 in the morning to smoke a cigarette before going back to sleep, and again at about six o'clock, when they had their first drink. By ten, they were pleasantly adrift, watching television in their Ralph Laurens or hanging out beside the swimming pool with the paperback mysteries they would swap with each other after reading the first twenty or thirty pages. It was because all the condos looked more or less alike, were furnished similarly, and had the same clothes hanging in the walk-in closets that the Hollows could afford the luxury of uncertainty at any given moment, whether they were in Florida or California, just as the basic uniformity of United Airlines' fleet and VIP lounges made air travel easy for them. Being unable to recall for very long the slights, resentments, and petty quarrels that make so many marriages miserable, Hasty and Happy had a good marriage, except for a real blowout now and then when they yelled and threw things at each other, set something on fire, or called their separate lawyers to demand that divorce proceedings be initiated. Depending on which one of them you talked to, they had been divorced three times or four, possibly as many as five. It didn't really matter, because Hasty's lawyer charged not more than $200 an hour, and Happy's only $175, and they had a lot more fun out of it all than they got from watching their soaps. Basically, divorce and the subsequent remarriage were just something to do, since, in spite (or maybe because) of each of them having more money than God, neither felt able to afford divorcing the other.

Their sensitivity on the subject of money increased after they bought the house near Durango, Colorado. They hadn't intended to buy an entire house anywhere, especially not a full-size one, but it happened anyway. They were attempting to fly from San Francisco to Santa Fe in May 2000, when they boarded the wrong plane and landed in Phoenix instead. The next flight up to Santa Fe wasn't for almost three hours, and when Happy became depressed by the number of old people hanging around the VIP lounge, the Hollows decided to rough it on a Mesa Airlines puddle-jumper. The plane sat on the runway for nearly a hour before take-off and, after less than an hour in the air, was diverted to Durango on account of bad weather. The entire trip, during which only water and soda pop were served, took forever, and by the time the Hollows landed through severe turbulence produced by a mountain storm cell, they hadn't had a drink for hours and were legally sober. Hasty suggested they go for a drink downtown, stay the night, and catch a flight over to Santa Fe in the morning.

At the bar up front of a French restaurant that evening, the Hollows ran into into a real-estate fellow named Squire.

"So you're a Johnny Walker Black man, too?" Happy asked him. "That tells me all I need to know about anyone, I always say."

Bob Squire said he'd spotted them for Johnny Walker drinkers the moment they walked through the door. JWB folks, he said, have class. He himself was in the high-end realty business, and so he could tell class when he saw it. Squire asked what brought them to Durango, and when Hasty explained they were on their way to spend time at their condo in Santa Fe, he looked doubtful. Santa Fe, he said with a sigh, was becoming *passé*. It was a shame, because by the time Santa Fe property owners woke up to what had happened, Durango would have been discovered already and property values would be out of sight. Right now, if you owned a condo in Santa Fe, you could sell it to Julia Roberts or somebody for big bucks, and buy three or four times the home in Durango for the same price. Plus, the West Slope was still a laid back place with an Old West atmosphere where people were willing to live and let live, and neighbors knew how to keep to themselves. The West was all about elbow room, Squire explained as he ordered a round from the barman, and that was the business he was in—selling elbow room to people who had never known what it was to have it before, helping them own a piece of the West.

The house the agent showed them the next day was built at the edge of a forest overlooking a creek five miles north of town. It had 7,500 square feet of floorspace—twenty-nine rooms on three stories; a mezzanine with a gallery running round the clerestory above the livingroom; six baths; an indoor swimming pool, workout room, and sauna; and an eight-car garage—and it was floored completely downstairs with marble flagstone imported direct from Carrera, Italy. The asking price was well into the eight-figure range, but Happy was sold; Hasty—who saw the property would require a

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full-time caretaker—less so. "So we drink Johnny Walker Red for the next year," Happy told him. "Big deal. It's worth it just to own a piece of the West, isn't it, darling? It's not as if we're planning on *living* here, you know."

Before they left for Santa Fe, the Hollows had found a caretaker from Ridgeway, a hamlet north of Ouray on the opposite side of Red Mountain Pass (elevation 11,018 feet). She was a cowgirl named Lynette Lyon whose family owned a small cattle ranch south of Montrose. Her father was a quarter Cherokee, Lynette said, but she didn't look Indian: a tall, willowy blonde with a long waist, large hands and small feet, a thin mouth, sharp blue eyes, and a pointed nose like a fox. Hasty finally agreed to pay her a thousand dollars per month to check on the property once a week, after she'd refused to work for $750. Later, he boasted to Bob Squire about the bargain he'd made, and Squire congratulated him on it. He didn't see any reason to mention Red Mountain Pass was mostly closed from October until May of each year. The locals, himself included, needed to make a living somehow.

The closing was at the end of July. The Hollows flew in from somewhere—later, they thought Jackson Hole—and out again the next day on their way back to Santa Fe. They didn't return until June of the following year, when they arrived at the Durango airfield without calling ahead and hired a taxi to drive them out to the property. Eight or ten pickup trucks stood parked in front of the house, where Lynette Lyon, dressed in a powder-blue Western outfit and matching cowboy hat, was holding a Western Swing class on the Carrera marble floor in front of the walk-in fireplace. Lynette did not appear surprised at all to see them, and Hasty and Happy went on upstairs to the master bedroom, accompanied by the driver, who brought up their bags.

"Kitty what's-her-name's kind of a cute girl, don't you think?" Happy asked Hasty. "Even in that tacky outfit she has on. We're definitely in Colorado now, Tootsie!"

The Hollows didn't go anywhere for a few days, recovering from their trip. By the fourth day, they were already vague when Hasty took a call from Lynette Lyon, calling from Durango where she'd given a Western Swing lesson, to remind him she hadn't received her monthly paycheck in the mail. He had trouble recalling who she was, but after Lynette made him understand, he invited her to stop by the house on her way up to the pass and collect the check in person.

The Hollows were sitting out on the wrap-around porch when she arrived, driving a cherry-red Ford pickup truck and wearing her powder-blue outfit. Hasty, who'd already forgotten she was coming, went indoors to look around for his checkbook, while Happy chatted on the porch with Lynette. Was Western Swing the "in" thing around here? she wanted to know. Lynette explained it wasn't "in" exactly, just Western, and that everyone in Colorado who liked to dance knew how. She offered to teach Happy if she wanted to learn, and Happy said, "Oh, really!" Later, when Lynette had gone and Hasty brought "tea" out on a tray, she said, "Honey . . . "

"Honey what?" Hasty asked her, setting down the tray with the bottle of Johnny Walker Black on it.

"Colorado's so backward and romantic, I think it would be nice if we could feel we really *fit in* somehow. Lynette's offered to give us private lessons at home for half-price, seeing as she's a salaried employee. We wouldn't have to actually *go out* anyplace. Lynette says you can buy fiddle music on CD. I've been remembering how, years ago, we used to love to dance together when we went out drinking. Our marriage could stand a little pepping up after all these years, don't you agree?"

After ten days, Hasty found learning Western Swing more enjoyable than he'd expected, while Happy had abruptly lost interest and wanted to move on to Santa Fe. They had a fight about it one afternoon, when both of them had been drinking more than usual. Hasty suggested Happy go ahead by herself, but she wouldn't hear of it: They'd always traveled together to provide support for each other. "And," Happy added, "don't think I haven't noticed the little bitch snuggling close to you, out there on the floor." Hasty denied having an interest in Lynette, but the fight ended anyway with Happy calling her lawyer in Chicago and demanding a divorce. The secretary said that Mr. von Sternberg was out of the office for two days but promised to have him call immediately when he returned.

That was on a Tuesday. Late Thursday afternoon, Hasty was sitting out in white flannels on the porch with a newly freshened drink when his wife appeared before him, looking like Lady MacBeth in the sleepwalking scene. "Something terrible has happened," she said in a spectral voice. "We've been legally divorced since Easter." Von Sternberg, in response to her call following their last fight, had filed the prepared legal papers and obtained the decree. Someone had even signed their names—she couldn't think who. "We can't *afford* to be divorced," Happy wailed. "You know that, Hasty. If one of us was to have an accident, or drop dead! . . . "

She was sober already; he groped to become alert. Their quarrel was forgotten entirely. They had no time to lose, both agreed. There were the plane tickets to Vegas to be purchased, the bloodwork to be done and the license to be procured in Nevada. Also, they had their bags to pack for a week, and the house needed to be shut up. "I'm calling Lynette," Hasty declared in a take-charge voice. "We need her out here, pronto."

Even with Lynette's help, it took them thirty-six hours to get squared away for the trip, and then Happy had a breakdown from the strain. Wrapped in a dressing gown and closeted in her bedroom with a glass and bottle, she suffered a psychotic spell in which she saw a gentleman in a scarlet coat, tight, white trousers, and top hat with a cane on his arm, standing in the driveway, looking up at her. Hasty did his best to reason with his wife through the locked door, but she refused to listen.

"You don't fool *me*!" Happy yelled. "You're not my husband, you're the Scarlet Pimpernel wanting to drag me back to Paris to be guillotined. Get off my property right now, you . . . you pimp!"

In these circumstances, Hasty was compelled to resort to the bottle himself. He drank without stop, neither sleeping nor eating for two days. On the afternoon of the second day, Lynette discovered him sitting on their luggage at the foot of the stairs in the foyer and staring at the empty glass in his hand, like a fish wanting back into its fishbowl.

"I need my wife to go with me to Las Vegas so we can be married," he said thickly.

"Don't worry, honey," Lynette Lyon said, putting her arm round his shoulders. "*I'll* be your wife, if you like."

Hasty looked and saw a woman beside him, approximately the size and shape of his wife and with blonde hair. It was a great relief to him to know she was still there.

"Thank God," he said, prayerfully. "You call a cab, while I get us a bottle for carry-on."

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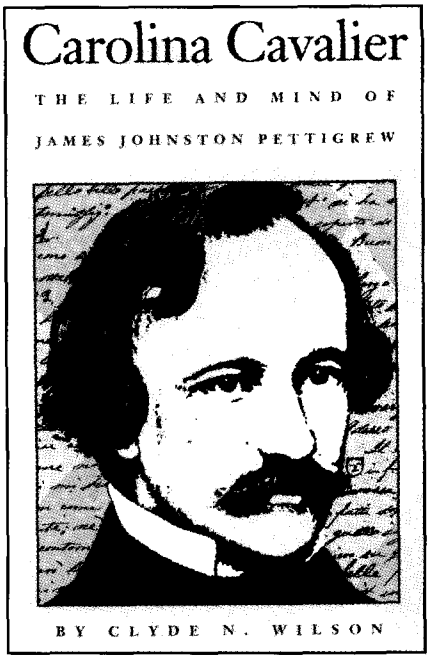

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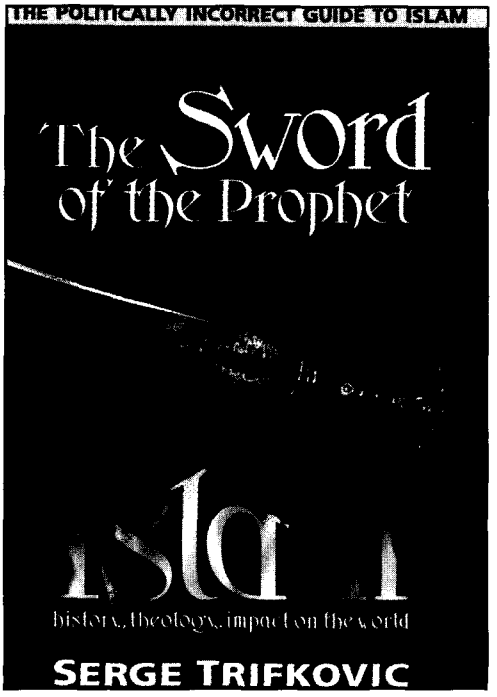
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